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THE MEMOIRS

OF

COUNT CARLO GOZZI

VOLUME THE SECOND

PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

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THE MEMOIRS OF

COUNT CARLO GOZZI

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

BY

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

With Essays on Italian Impromptu Comedy, Gozzi's Life,
The Dramatic Fables, and Pietro Longhi
By the TRANSLATOR

WITH PORTRAIT AND SIX ORIGINAL ETCHINGS
By ADOLPHE LALAUZE

ALSO ELEVEN SUBJECTS ILLUSTRATING ITALIAN COMEDY BY MAURICE SAND
ENGRAVED ON COPPER BY A. MANCEAU, AND COLOURED BY HAND

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME THE SECOND

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VOLUME THE SECOND.

The Etchings designed and etched by Ad. Lalauze. The Masks, illustrating the Italian Commedia dell' Arte, by Maurice Sand, engraved by A. Manceau, and coloured by hand.

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CARLO GOZZI.

XXXI.

Concerning my Physical and Mental Qualities.

In the course of these Memoirs I have promised more than once to give an exact description of my external appearance and internal qualities, and also to narrate the story of my love-affairs.

In stature I am tall. Of this I am made conscious by the large amount of cloth needed for my cloaks, and by the frequent knocks I give my forehead on entering rooms with low doors. I have the good luck to be neither crook-backed, lame, blind, nor squint-eyed. I call this good luck; and yet if I were afflicted with one or other of these deformities, I should bear it with the same lightness of heart at Venice as Scarron put up with his deformities in Paris.

This is all I know or have to say about my physical frame. From early youth I have left to women the trouble of telling me that I was hand-

some with a view to flatter me, or that I was ugly with a view to irritate, in neither of which attempts have they succeeded. Dirt and squalor I always loathed. Otherwise, if I ever chanced to wear clothes of a new cut, this was due to my tailor, and not to my orders. Ask Giuseppe Fornace, my rogue of a snip for over forty years, if I ever racked my brains about such matters, as so many do. From the year 1735 to 1780, at which date I am writing, I stuck to the same mode of dressing my hair with heroic constancy. Fashion has changed perhaps a hundred times during this period, yet I have never deviated from my adopted style of coiffure. In like manner I have worn the same type of buckles; except when I happened to break a pair, and was forced to change them from square to oval; and then I did so at the instance of the goldsmith, who made me take the lightest in his shop, because they would break sooner and give him more to do in mending them.

Men who talk little and think much, to which class, peradventure, I belong, being immersed in their own meditations, catch the habit of knitting their brows in the travail of reflection. This gives them an air of savagery, sternness, almost ferocity. Though I am gay by nature, as appears from my published writings, yet the innumerable thoughts which kept my brains in a turmoil, through anxieties about our family, lawsuits, schemes of economy, literary plans,

and so forth, bred in me a trick of contracting my forehead and frowning, which, combined with my slow gait, taciturnity, and preference for solitary places, won me the reputation among those who were not my familiar friends of being a surly, sullen, unapproachable fellow, perhaps even an enemy of mankind. Many who have come upon me, pondering, with knitted brows and gloomy downcast eyes, will have suspected that I was planning how to kill an enemy, while really I was constructing the plot of my *Green Bird*.

In the society of people new to me, I always appeared drowsy, stupid, silent, and lethargic, until I had studied their characters and ways of thinking. Afterwards I turned out quite the opposite; not, however, that I may not have remained a fool; but I was one of those fools who utter laconisms, less tiresome to the company than interminable flowery speeches.

I was not miserly, because I always loathed that vice, nor prodigal, for the sole reason that I was not rich. I cannot form any conception of the influence which wealth might have exercised over my imagination and my moral nature, both being doubtless not more free from foibles than in the case of other men and women.

I might have earned considerably by my numerous published works, but I made a present of them all to comedians and booksellers, or to persons who

sought to profit by giving them to the press. Perhaps I shall not be believed when I say that I invariably refused such profit for myself. Yet this is the fact. Some who are aware that I was far from rich, will take me to task for my indifference to gain; they will attribute my generosity to vainglory or to stupidity. I had, however, my own reasons, which were as follows. My writings were always marked by freedom, boldness, pungency, and satire upon public manners; at the same time, moral and playful in expression. Being unpaid, they gained the advantage of a certain decent independence, which secured for them toleration, appreciation, and applause on their own merits. Had I been paid for them, they would have lost their prestige; my antagonists might have stigmatised them as a parcel of insufferable mercenary calumnies, and I should have been exposed to universal odium.

In addition to this: there is no degradation for men of letters in Italy worse than that of writing for hire in the employ of publishers or of our wretched comedians. The publishers begin by caressing authors, with a view to getting hold of their works; then they turn round and cast their pretended losses in the author's teeth. To hear them, you would imagine that books for which they had begged on their knees before they sent them to press, were now a load of useless stones encumbering their shelves. The wretched pence they fling at a writer for some

masterpiece on which he has distilled the best part of his brains, are doled out with the air of bestowing alms. More fuss is made about it, and it costs more effort, than if the money were being paid for masses for the dead, who have no need to clothe and feed themselves. All this is bad enough. But Apollo protect a poet from being reduced to serve a troop of our comedians at wages! There is not a galley-slave more abjectly condemned to servitude than he. There is not a stevedore who carries half the weight that he does; not an ass who gets more blows and fouler language, if his drama fails to draw the whole world in a fever of excitement to the theatre.

For these reasons, I have always shrunk from letting out my pen to hire. On the frequent occasions when family affairs and litigation have emptied my purse, I always chose rather to borrow from friends than to plunge into the mire and rake up a few filthy stinking sequins. In the one case I incurred the pleasing burden of gratitude to my obligers; in the second I should have bent beneath the weight of shameful self-abasement.

Not even the brotherly terms on which I lived with comedians, nor my free gift to them through five-and-twenty years of all my writings for the stage, preserved me from the acts of ingratitude, and the annoyances which are described in the ensuing chapters of my Memoirs. Think then what would

have become of me if I had been their salaried poet!

Italy lacks noblemen, to play the part of Mecænas, and to protect men of letters and the theatre. Had there been such, and had they thought me worthy of their munificence, I should not have blushed to receive it. Knowing my country, however, and Venice in particular, I never allowed myself to indulge flattering dreams of any such honourable patronage.

Sustained by my natural keen sense of the ludicrous, I have never even felt saddened by seeing the morality, which I held for sound and sought to diffuse through my writings, turned upside down by the insidious subtleties and sophisms of our century. On the contrary, it amused me vastly to notice how all the men and all the women of this age believed in good faith that they had become philosophers. It has afforded me a constant source of indescribable recreation to study the fantastic jargons which have sprung up like mushrooms, the obscure and forced ways of expressing thoughts, spawned by misty self-styled science, invested with bombastic terms and phrases alien to the genius of our language. Not less have I diverted myself with the spectacle of all the various passions to which humanity is subject, suddenly unleashed, playing their parts with the freedom of emancipated imps, let loose from their hiding-place by famous discoverers—just like those

devils in the tale of Bonaventura des Périers, whom Solomon sealed up in a caldron and buried beneath the ground until a pack of wiseacres dug them up and sent them scampering across the world again.[1]

The spectacle of women turned into men, men turned into women, and both men and women turned into monkeys; all of them immersed in discoveries and inventions and the kaleidoscopic whirligigs of fashion; corrupting and seducing one another with the eagerness of hounds upon the scent; vying in their lusts and ruinous extravagances; destroying the fortunes of their families by turns; laughing at Plato and Petrarch; leaving real sensibility to languish in disuse, and giving its respectable name to the thinly veiled brutality of the senses; turning indecency into decency; calling all who differ from them hypocrites, and burning incense with philosophical solemnity to Priapus:—these things ought perhaps to have presented themselves to my eyes in the form of a lamentable tragedy; yet I could never see in them more than a farce, which delighted while it stupefied me.

I have made but few intimate friendships, being of opinion that a man of many friends is the real

[1] Despériers lived in France between 1480 and 1544. He was servant to Marguerite de Navarre, and a writer of Rabelaisian humour. His two principal works are called *Cymbalum Mundi* and *Nouvelles, Récréations et Joyeux Dévis.*

friend of none. Neither time, nor distance, nor even occasional rudeness, interrupted the rare friendships which I contracted for life, and which are still as firm as ever.

Now and then, I have given way to angry impulses on sustaining affronts or injuries; and at such times men of phlegmatic temper are more decided in their action than the irascible. Reflection, however, always calmed me down; nor was I ever disposed to endure the wretchedness which comes from fostering rancour or meditating revenge.

I am inclined to laugh both at *esprits faibles*, who believe in everything, and at *esprits forts*, who pretend that they believe in nothing. Yet I hold that the latter are really weaker, and I am sure that they do more harm, than the former.

Notwithstanding my invincible habit of laughing, I am firmly persuaded that man is a sublimely noble animal, raised infinitely far above the brutes. Consequently I could not condescend to regard myself as a bit of dung or mud, a dog or a pig, in the humble manner of freethinkers. In spite of all the pernicious systems generated by men of ambitious and seductive intellect, we are forced to believe ourselves higher in the scale of beings, and more perfect, than they are willing to admit. Although we may not be able to define with certainty what we are, we know at any rate beyond all contradiction what we are not. Let the freethinking pigs and hens rout in their mud

and scratch in their midden; let us laugh and quiz them, or weep and pity them; but let us hold fast to the beliefs transmitted to us by an august line of philosophers, far wiser, far more worthy of attention, than these sages of the muck and dungheap. The modern caprice of turning all things topsy-turvy, which makes Epicure an honest man, Seneca an impostor; which holds up Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvetius, Mirabeau, &c., to our veneration, while it pours contempt upon the fathers of the Church; this and all the other impious doctrines scattered broadcast in our century by sensual fanatics, more fit for the madhouse than the university, have no fascination for my mind. I contemplate the disastrous influence exercised by atheism over whole nations. This confirms me still more in the faith of my forefathers. When I think of those fanatics, the sages of the muck and midden, when I think of mankind deceived by them, I repeat in their behoof the sacred words of Christ upon the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Finally, I assert that I have always kept alive in me the flame of our august religion, and that this has been for me my greatest stay and solace during every affliction. The philosophers of the moment may laugh at me; I am quite contented for them to regard me as a dullard, besotted by what they choose to stigmatise as prejudice.

XXXII., XXXIII., XXXIV.

Condensed by the Translator.

[Gozzi having been accused by his adversary Gratarol of hypocrisy and covert libertinism, wished to make a full confession of his frailties to the world, while the witnesses of his life and conversation were still alive, and his statements could be challenged. With this object he related three love-passages of his early manhood. To omit these altogether from his Memoirs would be tantamount to doing him a grave injustice, since they were meant to illustrate his sentiments upon the delicate question of the relation between men and women in affairs of the heart. They are not, however, suited to the taste of the present century, being dictated with a frankness and a sense of humour which remind us of our own Fielding. Their tone is wholesome and manly, but some of their details are crude. It is the translator's duty in these circumstances to subordinate literary to ethical considerations. Repeating the stories, so far as possible, in Gozzi's own language, he must supply those parts which he feels bound to omit by a brief statement of fact. The portions of this chapter which are enclosed in brackets contain the trans-

lator's abstract. The rest is a more or less literal version of the original text.]

(i.)

Story of my first love, with an unexpected termination.

In order to relate the trifling stories of my love-adventures, I must return to the period of my early manhood. I ought indeed to blush while telling them, at the age which I have reached; but I promised the tales, and I shall give them with all candour, even though I have to blush the while.

Being a man, I felt the sympathy for women which all men feel. As soon as I could comprehend the difference between the sexes—and one arrives betimes at such discretion—women appeared to me a kind of earthly goddesses. I far preferred the society of a woman to that of a man. It happened, however, that education and religious principles were so deeply rooted in my nature, and acted on me so powerfully as checks to inclination, that they made me in those salad days extremely modest and reserved. I hardly know whether this modesty and this reserve of mine were quite agreeable to all the girls of my acquaintance during the years of my first manhood.

I can take my oath that I left my father's house, at the age of sixteen, on military service in Dalmatia,

innocent—I will not say in thoughts—but most innocent as to the acts of love. The town of Zara was the rock on which this frail bark of my innocency foundered; and since I hope to make my readers laugh at my peculiar bent in love-making, and also by the tales of my amours, I will first describe my character in this respect, and then proceed to the narratives.

I always preserved a tincture of romantic metaphysics with regard to love. The brutality of the senses had less to do with my peccadilloes than a delicate inclination and tenderness of heart. I cherished so lofty and respectful a conception of feminine honour and virtue that any women who abandoned themselves to facile pleasures were abhorrent to my taste. A *fille de joie*, as the voluptuaries say, appeared to me more frightful, more disgusting, than the Orc described by Boiardo.[1] Never have I employed the iniquitous art of seduction by suggestive language, nor have I ever allowed myself the slightest freedom which might stimulate desire. Languishing in soft and thrilling sentiments, I demanded from a woman sympathy and inclination of like nature with my own. If she fell, I thought that this should only happen through one of those blind and sudden transports which suppress our

[1] The Orco was a huge sea-monster, shaped like a gigantic crab. It first appeared in Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* (Bk. iii. Cant. 3), and was afterwards developed by Ariosto, *Orl. Fur.* (Cant. 17).

reason on both sides, the mutual violence of which admits of no control. Nothing could have been more charming to my fancy than the contemplation of a woman, blushing, terrified, with eyes cast down to earth, after yielding to the blind force of affection in self-abandonment to impulse. I should have remembered how she made for me the greatest of all sacrifices—that of honour and of virtue, on which I set so high a value. I should have worshipped her like a deity. I could have spent my life's blood in consoling her; and without swearing eternal constancy, I should have been most stable on my side in loving such a mistress. On the other hand, I could have safely defied all men alive upon the earth to take a more sudden, more resolute, and more irreversible step of separation than myself, however much it cost me, if only I discovered in that woman a character different from what I had imagined and conceived of her, while all the same I should have maintained her honour and good repute at the cost of my own life.

This delicate or eccentric way of mine in thinking about love exposed me to facile deceptions in my youthful years, when the blood boils, and self-love has some right to illusion, and the great acquirement of experience is yet to be made.

The narratives of my first loves will confer but little honour on the fair sex; but before I enter on them I must protest that I have always made

allowance for the misfortune under which, perhaps, I suffered, of having had bad luck in love; which does not shake my conviction that many phœnixes may be alive with whom I was unworthy to consort.

After living through the mortal illness which I suffered during the first days of my residence at Zara—an illness undergone and overcome in that squalid room described by me in the first part of these Memoirs—I moved into one of the so-called Quarterioni situated on the beautiful walls of Zara, and built for the use of officers. A very good room, which I furnished suitably to my moderate means, together with a kitchen, formed the whole of my apartment. I engaged a soldier for my service at a small remuneration. He had orders to retire in the evening to his quarters, leaving me a light burning. I remained alone; went to bed, with a book and a candle at my side; read, yawned, and fell asleep.

Now to attack the tale of my first love-adventure! Its details will perhaps prove tiresome, but they may yet be profitable to the inexperience of youngsters.

Opposite my windows, at a certain distance, rose the dwelling of three sisters, noble by birth, but sunk in poverty which had nothing to do with noble blood. An officer, their brother, sent them trifling monies from his foreign station, and they earned a little for their livelihood by various woman's work, with which

I saw them occupied. The elder of these three Graces would not have been ugly, if her bloodshot eyes, rimmed round with scarlet, had not obscured the lustre of her countenance. The second was one of those bewitching rogues who are bound to please. Not tall, but well-made, and a brunette; her hair black and long; eyes very black and sparkling. Under her demure aspect there transpired a force of physique and a vivacity which were certainly seductive. The third was still a girl, lively, spirited, with possibilities of good or evil in her make.

I never saw these three nymphs except by accident, when I opened the window at which I used to wash my hands, and when their windows were also open, which happened seldom. They saluted me with a becoming bow. I answered with equal decorum and sobriety. Meanwhile, I did not fail, as time went on, to notice that whenever I opened my window to wash my hands, that little devil, the second sister, lost no time in opening her window too, and washed her hands precisely while I was washing mine; also, when she bent her lovely head to greet me, she kept those fine black eyes of hers fixed on my face in a sort of dream, and with a kind of languor well fitted to captivate a lad. I felt, indeed, a certain tickling at my heart-strings; but the austere thoughts to which I was accustomed, cured me of that weakness; and without failing in civility, I kept myself within the bounds of grave indifference.

A Genoese woman, to whom I paid a trifle for ironing my scanty linen, came one morning with some of my shirts in a basket. Upon the washing lay a very fine carnation. "Whose is that flower?" I asked. "It is sent to you," she answered, "and from the hands of a lovely girl, your neighbour, for whom you have the cruelty to take no heed." The carnation and the diplomatic message—and well knew I from whence both came—increased the itching at my heart-strings. Nevertheless, I answered the ambassadress in terms like these: "Thank that lovely damsel on my part; but do not fail to tell her that she is wasting her flowers to little purpose."

My head began to spin round and my heart to soften. At the same time, when I reflected that I had no wish to enter into matrimonial engagements, which were wholly excluded from my plan of life, nor yet to prejudice the reputation of a girl by traffic with her—furthermore, when I considered how little money I possessed, to be bestowed on one in whom I recognised so much of beauty—I stamped out all the sparks of sympathy which drew me toward her. I began by never washing my hands at the window, in order to escape the arrows of those thievish eyes. This act of retirement was ineffectual; indeed, it led to worse consequences.

One day I was called to attend upon my old friend, the officer Giovanni Apergi, who had been my master in military exercises, and who was now in

bed, racked and afflicted with aches acquired in youthful dissipation. He had his lodging on the walls, not far away from mine, in the house of a woman well advanced in years, the wife of a notary. Thither then I went.

The elderly housekeeper began to twit me with my rustic manners. Gradually she passed to sharp but motherly reproof; in a youngster of from sixteen to seventeen, like myself, the sobriety of a man of fifty had all the effect of caricature; in particular, my treatment of well-bred handsome girls, devotedly in love with me, my driving them to desperation and tears by indifference and what appeared like scorn, did not deserve the name of prudence; it was nothing short of clownishness and tyranny. My friend, the officer, pulling wry faces and shrieking at the twinges of his gout, chimed in with similar reproaches: I was a little simpleton, a fool who did not know his own good fortune. "Oh, if I only had your youth, your health, your opportunities!" Groans interrupted these broken exclamations.

Just when I was preparing to defend myself, some one knocked, and the dangerous beauty came into the room, under the pretext of inquiring after the health of the officer. Her entrance checked my speech and made my heart beat faster. The conversation turned on general and decorous topics. The girl discovered qualities of wit and understanding; she was not very talkative, but sensible and modest.

Her eyes, which might in poetry have been called stars, told me clearly that I was an ingrate. Her visit to the sick man was really intended for the sound. At its close, she remarked that she had sent her servant back, because her elder sister was confined to bed by fever; might she beg for some one to conduct her home? "This gentleman," replied the elderly woman, pointing at once to me, "will be able to oblige you." "Oh, I do not wish to put him to trouble; I am not worthy of the honour." The cunning creature said this with ironical seriousness. I made the usual polite offer of my services, and rose to accompany her. We had not far to go, and during the brief journey both were silent. As she leant upon my arm, which was steadier than marble, I felt her tremble sensibly, and we were in the month of July. This tremor ran through my vitals, and made me tremble more than she did.

When we reached her dwelling, she begged me to step in and to give her the pleasure of a few minutes' conversation. We went upstairs, and I beheld a home breathing of indigence in all its details. In the room which I was asked to enter, her elder sister (the one with the red eyes) lay sound asleep upon a decent bed, notably different from the rest of the furniture. She was really ill, and we did not wish to wake her; so our conversation proceeded in a low voice. My beauty began to knit a stocking, and made me sit upon a little wretched sofa at her side. She whis-

pered, with downcast eyes, that some weeks ago she had conceived the greatest esteem for me, but that she feared she had not earned gratitude for her lively sentiments of regard. I answered in a whisper, but with raised eyes, that I believed in her sincerity; I did not suppose that she was flattering me; yet I was inquisitive to learn how she had come to entertain such partiality for a young man unknown to her, who was not worthy to excite the sentiments she had described. She replied, still whispering, but lifting her eyes a little, that she had told the simple truth. Her heart had first been touched when she saw me play the part of Luce, the *soubrette*, in the theatre. Afterwards, while watching me on the pallone-ground, this impression had been deepened. I listened with some repulsion to the motives of her passion, nor could I refrain from answering, with a laugh: "Surely modest girls are taken by the mental gifts and sterling qualities of a young man, not by such follies as you deign to mention." She dropped her fine eyes, mortified by this home-thrust. Then she replied with a finesse I hardly expected from a Dalmatian: "You cannot deny that public exploits, universally applauded, in a young man, have some right to impress a girl's imagination. I could indeed have defended my heart against these promptings, if your person had not pleased me; if you had not shown yourself in private to be governed by principles of modesty, sobriety, and prudence; if the whole city

were not edified by your behaviour, and ringing with perpetual eulogies of conduct rare indeed among those madcap fellows of the garrison. These reports confirmed my passion; and if now I find it scorned by you, I know not to what extremities despair will drive me." This speech flattered my *amour propre.* Tears, which she attempted to conceal, fell from her fine eyes, and stirred my sensibility. The beauty of the little devil had bewitched me. However, I summoned reason to my aid, and replied with gentle calmness: "Dear lady, I should be a monster if I were not grateful to you for your kind and precious sentiments. Still I am only a lad, dependent on my family, without the resources of fortune. Unable as I am to think of marriage, I should injure you and should commit a dishonourable action were I to frequent your society. The tenderness, which I feel only too deeply for you, might lead me also on my own side into some disaster. Precisely because I love you, it is my duty to shrink from anything which could be hurtful to you; and because you love me, it is your duty to shun what might prove disastrous to myself. Do not be hurt by what I have to say. I shall not cease to cherish in my breast an ardent affection for yourself; but from this hour forward I must avoid all opportunities of being in your company, not less for my own than for your advantage."

The stocking she was knitting fell to the floor. She took one of my hands and clasped it to her

bosom. Leaning her lovely cheek against my shoulder and shedding tears, she whispered, changing *you* to *thou* in the Dalmatian fashion: "Dear friend, how little dost thou know me! Thy prudent and ingenuous speech has only added to the ardour of my soul. Couldst thou suspect that my poverty was laying a trap for thy thrift? Couldst thou imagine that I was a dissolute girl, or that I was angling for a husband? Thou art mistaken. I make allowances for thy mistake. But, for pity's sake, learn to know me better. Grant me from time to time some moments of thy charming conversation. We will watch for these precious moments with discretion. Unless thou art a tiger of cruelty, do not abandon me to the unbearable torments of a burning heart." Her tears began to fall in showers. For my part, I remained deeply moved, confused, and, I confess, madly in love with this charming girl, who had so cleverly expressed a passion quite in harmony with my own idealistic tendencies. I promised to renew our meetings; and indeed this promise was made at least as much to my own heart as to hers. She showed the liveliest signs of satisfaction; but at this moment her sister woke. I explained the accident which brought me to their house; and then my innamorata led me to the staircase. There we shook and kissed hands. I departed, head over ears in love, a captivated blockhead.

We continued to find occasions for our meetings,

and with less of caution than we had agreed upon. During several days our conversations were playful, witty, piquant. It was an exchange of sentiments, of sighs, of little caressing epithets, of languors, pallors, trembling glances—of all those sweets, in short, which constitute the greatest charm, the most delicate, the most enduring delights of love. On my side, the restraint of modesty was not yet broken. On the girl's side, it did not seem to be so. One day, after playing pallone, I changed my shirt, and went to walk alone upon the ramparts. It was very hot, and I looked forward to the refreshment of the sea-breeze. Passing the house of the notary's wife, with whom my friend, the gouty officer, lodged, I heard my name called. Looking up, I saw the woman with my idol at the window. They asked me in, and I entered gladly. A walk upon the ramparts was proposed; and the officer, who happened to be better, wished to join our party. He gave his arm to the elderly dame; I offered mine to the blooming girl. He walked slowly, limping on his gouty toes. I walked slowly for a different reason; my heart, and not my toe, was smitten; besides, my sweetheart and I were more at liberty together, if we kept the other couple well in front. Meanwhile night began to fall. After taking a short turn, the officer complained of pain in his feet, and begged leave to go back with his elderly companion, adding that I could see my lady home when we had enjoyed

enough of the evening cool together. The pair departed, while I remained with my innamorata, lost in the ecstasies of love.

[At this point Gozzi proceeds to relate how the liaison between these two young people became most intimate. It had begun, as we have seen, with advances on the part of the girl, and now it was carried forward chiefly by her address and pertinacity.]

The intrigue continued for two months, with equal ardour on both sides. Blinded as we were by passion, we thought that it was hidden from all eyes; and yet perchance we were but playing the comedy of *Il Pubblico Secreto*.[1] At any rate, I must admit that I found in this girl a mistress exactly suited to my metaphysical ineptitude. She showed herself always tender, always in ecstasy, always afraid to lose me, always candid. Knowing how poor she was, I often wanted to divide my poverty with her. I used prayers, almost violence, to win her consent to this partition of my substance. But she took it as an unbearable insult, and broke into rage in her refusals, exclaiming with kisses which drew my soul forth to her crimson lips: "Thy heart is my true riches."

Certainly, a young man in his first love-passage sees awry, and makes mistakes through mere stupidity. The end of this amour, which seemed interminable, was brought about by an incident sufficiently absurd,

[1] This was one of Gozzi's own comedies.

and far removed from my delicate idealism. It happened that the Provveditore Generale was summoned to Bocche di Cataro, in order to settle some disputes between the tribe called Pastrovicchi and the Turks. I had to take sail with the Court. Good God! what agonies there were, what rendings of the heart, what tears, what vows of fidelity, at this cruel parting between two young creatures drowned in love! My absence lasted about forty days, which seemed to me as many years. Scarcely had I returned, and was rushing to my goddess, when a certain Count Vilio of Desenzano, master of the horse to the General, who had stayed behind at Zara (a man sufficiently dissolute in his amours, but a good and sincere friend), came up to me and spoke as follows: "Gozzi, I know that you are on the best of terms with such and such a girl. I should be acting wrongly if I did not inform you of what has happened in your absence, the truth of which I hold on sure foundations. You have a rival, one with whom it would ill become you to compete. I am certain that he has employed his time to good purpose. You have received my warning; rule yourself accordingly." These words were scorpions to my heart. Nevertheless, I chose to assume indifference, and put a bold face on the matter. So I forced myself to laugh, and answered, stammering perhaps a trifle, that it was quite true I knew the girl, but that my intercourse with her had

always been blameless, and that I had no cause to fear. I had invariably found her so modest and reserved that I suspected he must have been taken in by a bragging impostor, to the infinite injury of the poor girl's character. "I am not mistaken, by gad," cried Vilio in his Brescian way. "You are of years to know the world. I have done my duty as a friend, and that is enough for me."

He left me with my head stunned, my spirit in confusion, staggering upon my feet. From my earliest boyhood, I have always made a point of exercising self-control. Accordingly, I now stifled the imperious impulse which urged me to embrace my mistress. I did not merely postpone my visit, but I kept my windows shut, avoiding every opportunity of setting eyes on her. The Genoese laundress brought me diplomatic messages; to these I returned laconic and meaningless answers, without betraying the reason of my sudden coldness. Some notes were refused with heroic, or shall I call it asinine endurance. At the same time, I nourished in my breast a lively desire that my mistress might be innocent, and that the accusation of so base a fault might be proved a vile mendacious calumny. I hoped to arrive at the truth somehow, by adhering to severe and barbarous measures.

In course of time I obtained only too positive confirmation of my fears. Walking one day upon the ramparts, the elderly dame, of whom I have already spoken, called me from her window, and

begged me to come up. She had a word or two to say to me. I assented, and entered the house. Divining that she wished to speak about my mistress, I armed myself with caution. My plan was to allege decent excuses for my conduct, without touching the repulsive wound. However, I had not divined the whole. She led me into a room, where, to my surprise, I beheld the idol of my first affections, seated and shedding tears. "What I wanted to say to you," exclaimed the dame, "you will hear from the lips of this afflicted damsel." On this, she left the room, while I remained like a statue before the beauty I had adored, and who was still supremely charming in my sight. She lifted her forehead, and began to load me with the bitterest reproaches. I did not allow her to run on, but told her with resolute plainness that a young woman who, during my absence, had played so false was no longer worthy of my love. She turned pale, crying aloud: "What scoundrelly scandal-monger has dared . . ." Again I cut her speech short, adding: "Do not tire yourself by attempting the justification of your conduct. I know the whole truth from an infallible source. I am neither inconstant, nor a dreamer, nor ungrateful, nor unjust." The assurance with which I uttered these words made the poor girl lower her face, as though she was ashamed that I should look at her. Then bursting into a passion of tears, broken with

GOZZI AND HIS FIRST LOVE

Original Etching by Ad. Lalauze

sobs, she brought these incoherent phrases forth: "You are right . . . I am no longer worthy of you . . . Oh, cursed poverty, thrice-cursed poverty!" She was unable to continue, and I thought her tears would suffocate her. I was fit to drop to earth with the vertigo caused by this confession, which left no flattering hopes of innocence. My senses still painted a Venus in that desolated beauty. My romantic head and heart painted her a horrid Fury from the pit of hell. I kept silence. In my purse were some ducats, few indeed, but yet I had them. I took these coins out, and, speechless still, I let them gently drop into the loveliest bosom I have ever seen. Then I turned my back and fled. Half mad with grief, I bounded down the staircase like a greyhound, screaming with the ecstasy of one possessed by devils: "Cursed poverty! Cursed, thrice-cursed poverty!"

Since then I never saw the object of my first love. I thought I must have died under the pressure of a passion which gnawed my entrails, but which, although I was but a boy, I had the cruel strength to subjugate. Soon afterwards I learned with satisfaction that the unhappy girl had married an officer, but I never sought to trace her out or to hear more about her history.

(ii.)

The story of my second love-affair, with fewer platonisms and a more comic ending than the last.

About that time the Provveditore Generale found that he had need of my quarters for storing the appurtenances of his stables and of the coach-house, which were situated beneath the Quarterioni. Accordingly, I removed into a little pavilion, which my friend Signor Innocenzio Massimo and I had taken. It stood upon the ramparts. We could not occupy this dwelling long; for it was distant from the Court and from our place of duty. Moreover, when the winter season arrived, heavy rains, a terrible north-wind, and snowfalls made our nest uninhabitable. Massimo had some acquaintance with a shopkeeper and tradesman, who lived inside the town, and owned a house with rooms to spare and many conveniences. This man was married to a fine woman, plump and blooming; and God forgive me if I think it probable that Massimo was more intimate with the wife than the husband! Anyhow, he made arrangements with this excellent couple to rent two rooms, one for me, the other for himself, in close communication. We agreed for these rooms by the month, taking our meals with the masters; their table was homely but abundant, and the food excellent.

The couple were not blessed with children, but the man had adopted a poor girl, in order to perform an act of Christian charity. This child, who had scarcely reached her fourteenth year, dined and supped with us, as the adopted daughter of the house. Her behaviour betrayed nothing but the innocence belonging to her age. She had blonde hair, large blue eyes, an expression at once soft and languid, a pale complexion tinged with rose. She was rather thin than fleshy; but her figure was straight, lithe, and beautifully formed; in stature she promised to be tall, with something of majestic in her build. This girl came to dress me and arrange my hair for the part of Luce, whenever I played at the Court theatre. She joked and laughed, and turned me round to look at me. I made some harmless witticisms in reply. At this she laughed the louder. Such was our custom; but one evening, after she had done my hair for Luce, she suddenly gave me three or four kisses on my cheeks and lips. I was astonished. Yet I thought the girl so guileless, that I supposed she must have imagined she was kissing some one of her own sex, seeing me dressed like a female. This scene was repeated every evening with additions; and I began to perceive that her kisses were not as innocent as I supposed. Respect for my host's roof induced me to reprove her kindly but seriously, and so as not to rouse resentment in the girl. I warned her that such

kisses between man and woman were forbidden by our confessors.

[Gozzi now describes the peculiar relations which subsisted between the several members of his host's family, and the progress of his flirtation with the little serving-maid. He admits that she bewitched him by her fantastic and wayward coquetries—as of an elf, a sprite, an enchanted butterfly—which contrasted curiously with her demure and serious demeanour in public. "Her behaviour at table and about the house would have done credit to Santa Rosa." In private, she was a creature of whim, caprice, extravagant and reckless folly. He was on the point of losing his heart, or at least of trespassing beyond the bounds of prudence, when the following occurrences took place, which may be repeated in his own words.]

About a month remained before our Provveditore Generale Querini took sail for Venice. His successor was already at Zara; and I had arranged my own departure, to suit with that of my superior. I must admit, however, that I was so captivated by that little hussy's ways, that all my strength of mind could not prevent me from looking forward with real sadness to our parting.

A comic accident, which happened three days before I quitted Zara, cured me on the instant, and made me bless the hour of my embarkation for home. In order to make my narrative intelligible, I shall be

obliged to describe the plan and the construction of the house we occupied. After ascending the first stone staircase, one entered a large hall. At the end of this hall, on the right hand, were two chambers, in one of which the married couple slept, while Massimo occupied the other. On the left of the staircase lay my bedroom, near the door of which another opening led to the foot of a long ladder of thirty or more wooden steps. By this one mounted to a floor above. Just at the top of the ladder was a dormer window, looking out upon the roof, for the convenience of work-people, when tiles had to be replaced and other repairs made. At one side of this window you found a little chamber, the chaste cell in which my mistress slept.

The putative father of the girl, that charitable man, had conceived no suspicions with regard to me ; her behaviour and mine in public was marked with indifference, so well sustained that it suggested nothing to arouse a doubt about us. He was furiously jealous, however, and had some inklings that a certain young man, who inhabited the next house, might crawl along the roof at night like a cat, and get in by the window, if his adopted daughter left it open. His working jealousy suggested the following device. How it was executed, I do not know. But he secretly attached a thick log to the dormer window by a slender cord, in such a way that it was impossible to open the window without snap-

ping the twine, and letting the log fall headlong down the ladder with a fearful crash. This trap was meant to act as an alarm to the paternal guardian. One night while I was sweetly sleeping, an infernal uproar, as of something tumbling down the wooden stairs which ran along the boarding at my pillow's head, woke me up with an awful fright. I thought my sweetheart must have fallen, but it was only the log which went heavily lumbering down.

I jumped out of bed in my shirt, caught up a light, and sallied forth to give assistance to the wretched girl. While I was opening my door, I spied the putative father in his shirt with a light in one hand and a long naked scimitar clenched in the other, running like mad and rushing up the stairs to execute summary vengeance. His wife in her shirt hurried after, shrieking to make him stop. Massimo in his shirt, with a light, and with his brandished sword, issued at the same time from his bedroom, judging by the din that thieves were in the house. The husband ran upstairs, swearing. The wife followed, howling. I followed the wife, in dumb bewilderment. Massimo followed me, shouting: "Who is it? What is it? Make room for me! Leave me to do the business!" The scene was quite dramatic. The dormer window stood wide open. The girl in her smock had fallen, huddled together, terrified, and trembling, just beneath it. Her crime was manifest. We had much ado, all three of us, to curb the

rage of the so-called putative father, who had now become an Orlando Furioso, and was bent on cutting the throat of his adopted daughter. The row was terrible. During the long examinations which ensued, and in which, thanks to Heaven, no mention was made of me, it came out that this modest little damsel was very far from being the Santa Rosa that she seemed.

All these matters were finally made up with sermons, threats, entreaties for forgiveness, promises, vows to never do the like again, and a change of dormitory for the vestal. I left Zara, light of heart, three days after this event, horrified at the memory of my second love-affair.

(iii.)

Story of my third love-affair, which, though it is true history, women may, if they please, regard as fiction.

After my return to Venice occurred the events which I shall now proceed to narrate. This third amour was also the last of any essential importance in my life. During its development the romance and idealism of my nature, the delicacy of my emotions, seemed to meet with perfect correspondence in a mistress whose sublime sentiments matched my own. Why I say *seemed*, will appear in the sequel of this story, out of which Boccaccio

might have formed a first-rate novel. The recital must be lengthy; but I crave indulgence from my readers, feeling that the numerous episodes which it contains and the abundance of curious material deserve a careful handling.

I occupied some little rooms at the top of our house in Venice. Here I used to sleep, and pass whole days in study. From time to time, while I was working, an angel's voice arrested my attention, singing melancholy airs attuned to sad and plaintive melodies. This lovely voice came from a house which was only divided by a very narrow alley from my apartment. My windows opened on the house in question; and so it happened, as a matter of course, that one fine day I caught sight of its possessor sitting at her window sewing. Leaning at one of my windows, I found myself so close to the lady that civility obliged me to salute her. She returned my bow with courteous gravity. It was a young woman of about seventeen, married, and endowed with all the charms which nature can confer. Her demeanour was stately; complexion, very white; stature, middle-sized; the look of her eyes gentle and modest. She was neither plump nor lean. Her bust presented an agreeable firmness; her arms were rounded, and she had the most beautiful hands. A scarlet riband bound her forehead, and was tied in a bow behind her thick and flowing tresses. On her countenance dwelt a fixed

expression of profound sadness, which compelled attention. In spite of these distinguished qualities, I was far from engaging my romantic heart upon the spot. My adventures at Zara were too fresh in my memory, and had taught me some experience.

When one has a beautiful young woman for one's next-door neighbour, it is easy to pass by degrees from daily compliments and salutations to a certain sort of intimacy. One begins to ask: "How are you?" or "Did you sleep well last night?" One exchanges complaints upon the subject of the weather, the scirocco, the rain. At length, after some days passed in such inquiries on topics common to all stupid people, one is anxious to show that one is not as stupid as the rest of the world.

I asked her one morning why she invariably exercised her charming voice in mournful songs and plaintive music. She replied that her temperament inclined to melancholy; that she sang to distract her thoughts, and that she only found relief in sadness. "But you are young," I said. "I see that you are well provided; I recognise that you have wit and understanding; you ought to overcome your temperament by wise reflections; and yet, I cannot deny it, there is always something in your eyes and in your face which betrays a chagrin unsuited to your years. I cannot comprehend it." She answered with much grace, and with a captivating half-smile, that "since she was not a man, she could not know

what impression the affairs of this world make upon the minds of men, and since I was not a woman, I could not know what impression they make upon the minds of women." This reply, which had a flavour of philosophy, sent a little arrow to my heart. The modest demeanour, the seriousness, and the cultivation of this Venetian lady pictured her to me immesurably different from the Dalmatian women I had known. I began to flatter myself that here perhaps I had discovered the virtuous mistress for whom my romantic, metaphysical, delicate heart was sighing. A crowd of reflections came to break the dream, and I contented myself with complimenting her upon her answer. Afterwards, I rather avoided occasions for seeing and talking with her.

Certainly she must have had plenty of work to finish; for I observed her every day seated at the same window sewing with melancholy seriousness. While shunning, so far as this was possible, the danger of conversing with her, my poor heart felt it would be less than civil not to speak a word from time to time. Accordingly we now and then engaged in short dialogues. They turned upon philosophical and moral topics—absurdities in life, human nature, fashion. I tried to take a lively tone, and entered upon some innocent witticisms, in order to dispel her gloom. But I rarely succeeded in waking a smile on her fair lips. Her replies were always sensible, decorous, ingenious, and acute. While debating

some knotty point which admitted controversy, she forgot to work, left her needle sticking in the stuff, looked me earnestly in the face and listened to my remarks as though she were reading a book which compelled her to concentrate her mind. Flattering suggestions filled my head. I sought to extinguish them, and grew still more abstemious in the indulgence of our colloquies.

More than a month had passed in this way, when I noticed, on opening a conversation of the usual kind, that the young woman gazed hard at me and blushed a little, without my being able to assign any cause for her blushes. A few indifferent sentences were exchanged. Still I perceived her to be restless and impatient, as though she were annoyed by my keeping to generalities and not saying something she was waiting for. I did not, and really could not, make it out. I might have imagined she was expecting a declaration. But she did not look like a woman of that sort, and I was neither bold nor eager enough to risk it. At length I thought it best to remark that I saw she had things to think over, and that I would not infringe upon her leisure further. I bowed, and was about to take my leave. "Please, do not go!" she exclaimed in some distress, and rising at the same time from her chair: "Did you not receive, two days ago, a note from me in answer to one of yours, together with a miniature?" "What note? What answer? What

miniature?" cried I in astonishment: "I know nothing about the matter." "Are you telling the truth?" she asked, turning pale as she spoke. I assured her on my honour that I did not know what she referred to. "Good God!" she said with a sigh, and sinking back half-fainting on her chair: "Unhappy me! I am betrayed." "But what is it all about?" continued I, in a low voice, from my window, truly grieved to be unable to assist her. Ultimately, after a pause of profound discouragement, she rose and said that in her position she had extreme need of advice. She had obtained her husband's permission to go that day after dinner to visit an aunt of hers, a nun, on the Giudecca. Therefore she begged me to repair at twenty-one o'clock to the *sotto portico* by the *ponte storto* at S. Apollinare.[1] There I should see, waiting or arriving, a gondola with a white handkerchief hung out of one of its windows. I was to get boldly into this gondola, and I should find her inside. "Then you will hear all about the circumstances in which my want of caution has involved me." This she spoke

[1] These words have so much local colouring that they must be left in the text and explained in a note. A *sotto portico* at Venice is formed by the projection of houses over the narrow path which skirts a small canal or *rio;* the first floor of the houses rests on pillars at the water-side. A *ponte storto* is a bridge built askew across a *rio*, not at right angles to the water, but slanting. A *riva* is the quay of stone which runs along the canals of Venice, here and there broken by steps descending into the water and serving as landing-places.

with continued agitation. "I have no one but you to go to for advice. If I deserve compassion, do not fail me. I believe enough in your discretion to confide in you." With these words she bowed and rapidly retired.

I remained fixed to the spot, like a man of plaster; my brains working, without detecting the least clue to the conundrum; firmly resolved, however, to seek out the *sotto portico*, the *ponte storto*, and the gondola. I took my dinner in haste, nearly choked myself, and alleging business of the last importance, flew off to the *ponte storto*. The gondola was in position at a *riva*, with the flag of the white handkerchief hung out. I entered it in haste, impelled perhaps by the desire to join the lovely woman, perhaps by curiosity to hear the explanation of the letters and the miniature. When I entered, there she was, resplendent with gems of price at her ears, her throat, her fingers, underneath the *zendado*.[1] She made room for me beside her, and gave orders to the gondolier that he should draw the curtain, and row toward the Giudecca to a monastery which she named.

She opened our conversation by apologising for having given me so much trouble, and by begging me not to form a sinister conception of her character. The invitation, it was true, exposed her to the risk of being taken for a light woman, considering her

[1] See above, vol. i. p. 299.

obligations as a wife. To this she added that she had already formed a flattering opinion of my discretion, prudence, honourable conduct, and upright ways of thinking. She proceeded to tell me that she found herself much embarrassed by circumstances. She asked me if I knew a woman and a man, a poor married couple, whom her husband lodged under his roof, renting them a room and kitchen on the ground-floor. I replied with the frankness of veracity that I was perfectly ignorant regarding the persons whom she indicated; far from being aware that they dwelt in her house, I did not know of their existence in the universe. At this answer, she closed her eyes and lips, as though in pain; then she resumed: "And yet the man assured me that he knew you perfectly, and possessed your thorough confidence; furthermore, he brought me this note from you, in the greatest secrecy; you can read it, and discover whether I am speaking true." Upon this she drew the billet from her bosom, and handed it to me.

I opened it with amazement, and saw at once that I had never written it. I read it through, and found in it the divagations of a most consummate lady-killer, full of panegyrics on the fair one's charms, oceans of nauseous adulation, stuffed out with verses filched from Metastasio. I was on the point of giving way to laughter. The concluding moral of the letter was that I (who was not I), being desperately in love with her, and forecasting the impossibility of

keeping company with her, saw my only hope in the possession of her portrait; if I could obtain but this, and keep it close to a heart wounded by Cupid's dart, this would have been an immense relief to my intense passion.

"Is it conceivable, madam," said I, after reading this precious effusion, "that you have conceived a gracious inclination toward me, grounded on my discretion, on my prudence, on my good principles, on my ways of thinking, and that after all this you have accepted such ridiculous and stupid stuff as a composition addressed by me to you?" "So it is," she answered: "we women cannot wholly divest us of a certain vanity, which makes us foolish and blind. Added to the letter, the man who brought it uttered words, as though they came from you, which betrayed me into an imprudence that will cost me many tears, I fear. I answered the letter with some civil sentiments, cordially expressed; and as I happened to have by me a miniature, set in jewels, and ordered by my husband, I consigned this to the man in question, together with my note, feeling sure that if I were obliged to show the picture to my husband, you would have returned it to me. It seems then that you have received neither the portrait nor my letter in reply?" "Is it possible," I answered, "that you are still in doubt about my having done this thing? Do you still believe me capable of such an action?" "No, no!" she said:

"I see only too well that you have nothing to do with the affair. Poor wretched me! to what am I exposed then? A letter written by my hand . . . that portrait . . . in the keeping of that man . . . my husband! . . . For heaven's sake, give me some good counsel!" She abandoned herself to tears.

I could do nothing but express my astonishment at the cleverness of the thief. I tried to tranquillise her; then I said that, if I had to give advice, it was necessary that I should be informed about the man and wife who occupied her house, and about the intimacy she maintained with them. She replied that the husband seemed to be a good sort of fellow, who gained something by a transport-boat he kept. "The wife is a most excellent poor creature, and a devoted daughter of the Church. She is attached to me, and I to her. I often keep her in my company, have often helped her in her need, and she has shown herself amply grateful. You know that, between women, we exchange confidences which we do not communicate to men. She is aware of certain troubles which beset me, and which I need not speak to you about; and she feels sorry for me. She has heard me talking at the window with you, and has joked me on the subject. I made no secret to her of my inclination, adding however that I knew my duties as a wife, and that I had overcome the weakness. She laughed at me, and encouraged me to be a little less regardful on

this point. That is really all I have to tell you, and I think I shall have said perhaps too much." So she spoke, and dropped her eyes. "You have not said enough," I put in: "That excellent Christian woman, your confidante—tell me, did she ever see your portrait set in jewels?" "Oh, yes! I often showed it to her." "Well, the excellent and so forth woman has told everything to her excellent husband. They have laid their heads together, and devised the roguery of the forged letter to abstract your jewelled miniature. The worst is that the excellent pair had some secretary to help them in their infernal conciliabulum." "Is it possible?" exclaimed she, like one bewitched. "You may be more than sure that it is so; and shortly you will obtain proof of this infallible certainty." "But what can I do?" "Give me some hints about your husband's character, and how he treats you." "My husband adores me. I live upon the most loyal terms with him. He is austere, and does not wish to be visited at home. But whenever I ask leave to go and pay my compliments to relatives or female friends, he grants me permission without asking further questions." "I do not deny that your want of caution has placed you in a position of delicacy and danger. Nevertheless, I will give you the advice, which I think the only one under these uncomfortable circumstances. That excellent Christian woman, your confidante, does she know perhaps that I was going

to meet you in the gondola to-day?" "No, sir! certainly not, because she was not at home." "I am glad to hear it. This, then, is my advice. Forget everything about the miniature, just as though you had never possessed it; bear the loss with patience, because there is no help for it. If you attempted to reclaim it, the villain of a thief and his devout wife and the secretary, finding their roguery exposed, might bring you into the most serious trouble. If your husband has a whim to see the miniature, you can always pretend to look for it and not to find it, affect despair, and insinuate a theft. Do not let yourself be seen henceforward at the window talking with me. Go even to the length of informing your confidante that you intend to subjugate an unbecoming inclination. Treat the pair of scoundrels with your customary friendliness, and be very cautious not to betray the least suspicion or the slightest sign of coolness. Should the impostor bring you another forged letter under the same cloak of secrecy, as I think he is pretty sure to do, take and keep it, but tell him quietly that you do not mean to return an answer; nay, send a message through the knave to me, to this effect—that you beg me to cease troubling you with letters; that you have made wholesome reflections, remembering the duty which an honest woman owes her husband. You may add that you have discovered me to be a wild young fellow of the worst character, and that you are very

sorry to have intrusted me with your miniature. Paint me as black as you can to the rascal; if he takes up the cudgels in my defence, as he is sure to do in order to seduce you, abide by your determination, without displaying any anger, but only asking him to break the thread of these communications which annoy you. You may, if matters take a turn in that direction, waste a ducat or two upon the ruffian, provided he swears that he will accept no further messages or notes from me. This is the best advice which I can give you in a matter of considerable peril to your reputation. Pray carry my directions out with caution and ability. Remember that your good name is in the hands of people who are diabolically capable of blackening it before your husband to defend themselves. I flatter myself that before many days are past you will find that my counsel was a sound one."

The young woman declared herself convinced by my reasoning. She promised to execute the plan which I had traced, and vowed that her esteem for me had been increased. At this point we reached the Giudecca, where she had to disembark. With a modest pressure of one of her soft hands on mine, she thanked me for the trouble I had taken in her behalf, begging me to maintain my cordial feelings toward her, and assuring me that she prized our friendship among the great good fortunes of her life. I left her gondola, and reached Venice by another

boat, considerably further gone in love, but with my brain confused and labouring. Love and the curious story I had heard kept me on the stretch.

A week or more passed before I saw her again. Yet I was always anxious to meet her, and to hear how she had managed with those sharpers. At last she showed herself one morning in her workroom; and while I was passing along by my open window, she threw a paper tied to a pebble into the room; then disappeared. I picked the missive up, and read the scroll, of which the purport was to this effect: "She had to pay a visit to a friend after dinner; her husband had given his permission; could I meet her at the former hour, and at the former *ponte storto?* There I should see a gondola waiting with the former ensign of the handkerchief. She begged me to jump into the boat; for she was sorely pressed to tell me something." I went accordingly, and found my lady at the rendezvous. She seemed more beautiful than I had ever seen her, because her face wore a certain look of cheerfulness which was not usual to it. She ordered the gondolier, who was not the same as on the previous occasion, to take a circuit by the Grand Canal, and afterwards to land her in a certain *rio* at Santa Margherita. Then she turned to me and said that I was a famous prophet of events to come. From her bosom she drew forth another note and handed it to me. It was written in the same hand as the first. The caricature of

passion was the same. I, who was not I, thanked her for the portrait; vowed that I kept it continually before my eyes or next my heart. I, who was not I, complained loudly that she had deserted the window; I was miserable, yet I comforted myself by thinking that she kept apart from prudent motives. I, who was not I, had no doubts of her kindness; as a proof of this, being obliged to wait for a draft, in order to meet certain payments, and the draft not having yet arrived, I, who was not I, begged for the loan of twenty sequins, to discharge my obligations. I promised to repay them religiously within the month. She might give the money to the bearer, a person known to me, a man of the most perfect confidence, &c., &c.

I confess that I was angry after reading this. The lady laughed at my indignant outburst. "How did you deal with the impostor?" I cried. "Exactly as you counselled me," she answered: "excuse me if I painted you as black as possible to the fellow. He stood confused and wanted to explain; but on seeing that my mind was made up, he held his tongue, completely mortified. I ordered him to talk no more to me about you, and to accept no further messages or letters. Then I gave him a sequin, on the clear understanding that he should never utter a word again to me concerning you. I told him that I was resolved to break off all relations with you. To what extent our relations have been broken off, you can

see for yourself now in this gondola; and they will only come to an end when you reject my friendship, which event I should reckon as my great disaster. I swear this on my honour."

"I must report another favourable circumstance," she continued: "My husband surprised that rogue in the act of stealing some ducats from a secret drawer in his bureau. He told the man to pack out with his wife, threatening to send him to prison if they did not quit our premises at once." "Were you clever enough," I said, "to affect a great sorrow for those unfortunate robbers, sent about their business?" "I did indeed try to exhibit the signs of unaffected sorrow," she replied; "I even made them believe that I had sought to melt my husband's heart with prayers and tears, but that I found him firm as marble. I gave them some alms, and three days ago they dislodged."

"Well done!" I exclaimed: "the affair could not have gone better than it does. Now, even if your husband asks to see the portrait, it will be easy to persuade him that they stole it. You will incur no sin of falsehood; for steal it they did, in good sooth, the arrant pair of sharpers." "Ah!" cried she, "why cannot I enjoy the privilege of your society at home? What relief would my oppressed soul find in the company of such a friend! My sadness would assuredly be dissipated. Alas! it is impossible. My husband is too too strict upon the point of visitors. I must

abandon this desire. Yet do not cease to love me; and believe that my sentiment for you exceeds the limits of mere esteem. Be sure that I shall find occasions for our meeting, if indeed these be not irksome to yourself. Your modesty and reserve embolden me. I know my duties as a married woman, and would die sooner than prove myself disloyal to them." We had now arrived at Santa Margherita. She clasped my hand with one of the loveliest hands a woman ever had. I wished to lift it to my lips. She drew it back, and even deigned to bend as though to kiss my own. That I could not permit; but leapt from the gondola, a simpleton besotted and befooled by passion. Then she proceeded on her way to the house she meant to visit.

This heroine of seventeen summers, beautiful as an angel, had inflamed my Quixotic heart. It would be a crime, I reflected, not to give myself up to a Lucretia like her, so thoroughly in harmony with my own sentiments regarding love. "Yes, surely, surely I have found the phœnix I was yearning for!"

A few days afterwards the pebble was once more flung into my chamber. The paper wrapped around it spoke of *ponte storto*, gondola, a visit to a cousin in childbed. I flew to the assignation. Nor can I describe the exultation, the vivacity, the grace, with which I was welcomed. Our conversation was both lively and tender; an interchange of sentiments

diversified by sallies of wit. Our caresses were confined to clasped hands and gentle pressure of the fingers at some *mot* which caught our fancy. She never let fall an equivocal word, or gave the slightest hint of impropriety. We were a pair of sweethearts madly in love with one another, yet respectful, and apparently contented with the ecstasies of mutual affection. The pebble and the scroll, the *ponte storto*, and the gondola were often put in requisition. I cannot say what pretexts she discovered to explain her conduct to her husband. The truth was that her visits for the most part consisted in our rowing together to the Giudecca or to Murano, where we entered a garden of some lonely cottage, and ate a dish of salad with a slice of ham, always laughing, always swearing that we loved each other dearly, always well-behaved, and always melting into sighs at parting. I noticed that in all this innocent but stolen traffic she changed her gondola and gondolier each time. This did credit to her caution. We had reached the perfection of a guiltless friendship—to all appearances, I mean—the inner workings of imagination and desires are uncontrollable. *You* had become *thou*, and yet our love delights consisted merely in each other's company, exchanging thoughts, clasping hands, and listening now and then to hearts which beat like hammers.

One day I begged her to tell me the story of her marriage. She replied in a playful tone: "You will

laugh; but you must know I am a countess. My father, Count so-and-so, had only two daughters. He is a spendthrift, and has wasted all his patrimony. Having no means to portion off us girls, he gave my sister in marriage to a corn-factor. A substantial merchant of about fifty years fell in love with me, and my father married me to him without a farthing of dowry. At that time I was only fifteen. Two years have passed since I became the wife of a man who, barring the austerity of his old-fashioned manners, is excellent, who maintains me in opulence, and who worships me." (I knew all about the Count her father, his prodigality and vicious living.) "But during the two years of your marriage," said I, "have you had no children?" The young lady showed some displeasure at this question. She blushed deeply, and replied with a grave haughtiness: "Your curiosity leads you rather too far." I was stung by this rebuke, and begged her pardon for the question I had asked, although I could not perceive anything offensive in it. My mortification touched her sympathy, and pressing my hand, she continued as follows: "A friend like you has the right to be acquainted with the misfortune which I willingly endure, but which saddens and embitters my existence. Know then that my poor husband is far gone in lung-disease; consumed with fever, powerless; in fact, he is no husband. Nearly all night long he sheds bitter tears, entreating forgive-

ness for the sacrifice imposed upon me of my youth. His words are so ingenuous, so cordial, that they make me weep in my turn, less for my own than for his misfortune. I try to comfort him, to flatter him with the hope that he may yet recover. I assure you that if my blood could be of help, I would give it all to save his life. He has executed a legal instrument, recognising my marriage dowry at a sum of 8000 ducats, and is constantly trying to secure my toleration by generous gifts. One day he pours ducats into my lap, then sequins, then great golden medals; at another time it is a ring or a sprig of brilliants; now he brings stuffs for dresses or bales of the finest linen, always repeating: 'Put them by, dear girl. Before long you will be a widow. It is the desire of my soul that in the future you may enjoy happier days than those which now enchain you to a fatal union.' There then is the story of my marriage. You now know what you wished to know about my circumstances." Soon after she resumed, changing her tone to one of pride and dignity: "I am afraid that this confession, which you extorted from me, may occasion you to form a wrong conception of my character. Do not indulge the suspicion that I have sought your friendship in order to obtain vile compensations. If I discovered the least sign in you of such dishonouring dirty thoughts, I should lose at once the feeling which drew me toward you, and our friendship would be irrevocably broken."

I need hardly say that this discovery of a Penelope in my mistress was exactly what thrilled my metaphysical heart with the most delicious ecstasy. Six months meanwhile had flown, and we were still at boiling-point. I used to write her tender and platonic sonnets, which she prized like gems, fully appreciating their sense and literary qualities. I also wrote songs for the tunes she knew; and these she used to sing at home, unseen by me, surpassing the most famous sirens of the stage by the truth and depth of her feeling. I am afraid that my readers will be fatigued by the long history of this semi-platonic amour. Yet the time has now arrived when I must confess that it degenerated at last into a mere vulgar *liaison*. It pains me; but truth demands that I should do so. Indeed, it was hardly to be expected that a young man of twenty and a girl of seventeen should carry on so romantic and ethereal a friendship for ever.

One day I saw my mistress seated with a very sad expression at her window. I inquired what had happened. She answered in a low voice that she had things of importance to communicate, and begged me to be punctual at the gondola, the *ponte storto*. Nothing more. Her reserve made me tremble for the future which might lie before us.

She told me that she was much distressed about her husband. He was very ill. The doctors had recommended him to seek the temperate air of Padua

and the advice of its physicians. He had departed in tears, leaving her alone with a somnolent old serving-woman. I was genuinely sorry for the cause of her distress; but the news relieved me of my worst fears. After expatiating on the sad occurrence and over-acting her grief, I thought, even to the extent of shedding tears, she entered into a discourse which presented a singular mixture of good sense, tenderness, and artifice. "My friend," she said, "it is certain that I must be left a widow after a few days. How can a widow in my youthful years exist alone, without protection? I shall only have my father's house to seek as an asylum. He is a man of broken fortunes, burdened with debts, enslaved to the vices of extravagance. My natural submission to him as a daughter will be the ruin of my fortune. After a short space of time I shall be left young, widowed, and in indigence. I have no one to confide in except yourself, to whom I have yielded up my heart, my virtue, and my reputation. In my closet I have stored a considerable sum of money, jewels, gold and silver objects of value. Will you oblige me by taking care of these things, so that my father may not lay his talons on them, under the pretext of guarding my interests in the expected event of my poor husband's death? Should he succeed in doing so, I am certain that before two months are over the whole will be dissipated. You will not refuse me this favour? Little by little I

will convey to your keeping all that I possess. I shall also place in your hands the deed by which my husband recognised the dowry of which I spoke to you upon another occasion. My father knows nothing of this document; and in the sad event of my husband's death it may well be possible that I shall need the assistance of some lawyer to prove my rights and the maintenance which they secure me. For the direction of these affairs I trust in you. You love me, and I doubt not that you will give me your assistance in these painful circumstances."

I saw clearly that the object of this speech was to bring me to a marriage without mentioning the subject. Now I was extremely averse to matrimony for two reasons. First, because I abhorred indissoluble ties of any sort. Secondly, because my brothers were married, with large families, and I could not stomach the prospect of charging our estate with jointures, and of procreating a brood of little Gozzis, all paupers. Nevertheless, I loved the young woman, felt sincerely grateful toward her, and in spite of what had happened between us, believed her to be virtuous and capable of making me a faithful wife. My heart adapted itself in quiet to the coming change, and conquered its aversion to a matrimonial bond.

A very surprising event, which I am about to describe, released me from all obligations to my

mistress, dispelled my dreams of marriage, and nearly broke my heart.

Well; I did my best to comfort the fair lady. I told her that perhaps her husband's case was not so desperate as she imagined. Next I firmly refused to become the depositary of her property. My reasons were as follows. In the first place, I had no receptacle to which the goods could be transferred with secrecy and safety. In the next place, her husband might survive and make inquiries. This would compromise the reputation of both her and me. I thanked her for the confidence she reposed in me, and vowed that she should always, at the hour of need, find me ready to support her as the guardian of her rights, her friend, and a man devoted to her person. She expressed herself satisfied with my decision; and once again we abandoned ourselves to the transports of a love which only grew in strength with its indulgence. She was an extraordinary woman; perfectly beautiful, always graceful, always new. Even in her hours of passion she preserved a modesty which overwhelmed my reason. Would that the six months of our platonic love had been prolonged into a lifetime, instead of yielding place to sensuality! In that case, the unexpected accident, which cut short our intercourse in a single moment, would not have inflicted the wound it did upon my feelings.

A friend of mine came about this time to Venice

on business, and took up his quarters with me. He observed me exchanging some words with this young lady, and began to banter me, loudly praising my good taste. I played the part of a prudish youngster, exaggerated the virtues of my neighbour, and protested that I had never so much as set foot in her house—which was indeed the truth. It was not easy to deceive my friend in anything regarding the fair sex. He positively refused to believe me, swearing he was sure I was the favoured lover of the beauty, and that he had read our secret in the eyes of both. "You are a loyal friend to me," he added; "but in the matter of your love-affairs, I have always found you too reserved. Between comrades there ought to be perfect confidence; and you insult me by making a mystery of such trifles." "I can boast of no intimacy whatever with that respectable lady," I replied; "but in order to prove my sincerity toward my friend, I will inform you that even if I enjoyed such an intimacy as you suspect, I would rather cut my tongue out than reveal it to any man alive. For me the honour of women is like a sanctuary. Nothing can convince me that men are bound by friendship to expose the frailty and the shame of a mistress who has sacrificed her virtue, trusting that the man she loves will keep the secret of her fault; nor do I believe that such honourable reticence can be wounding to a friend." We argued a little on this point, I maintaining my position, he treating it with

ridicule, and twitting me with holding the opinions of a musty Spanish romance.

Meanwhile he was always on the watch to catch sight of my goddess, and to exchange conversation with her at the window. He drenched her with fulsome compliments upon her beauty, her elegance and her discretion, artfully interweaving his flatteries with references to the close friendship which had united himself and me for many years. To hear him, one would have thought that we were more than brothers. She soon began to listen with pleasure, entering deeper and deeper into the spirit of these dialogues. Though ready to die of irritation, I forced myself to appear indifferent. I knew the man to be an honourable and a cordial friend; but with regard to women, I knew that he was one of the most redoubtable pirates, the most energetic, the most fertile in resources, who ever ploughed the seas of Venus. He was older than I; a fine man, however, eloquent, sharp-witted, lively, resolute and expeditious.

Some days went by in these preliminaries, and the date of his departure was approaching. In other circumstances I should have been sorry at the prospect of parting from him. Now I looked forward to it with impatience. One morning I heard him telling her that he had taken a box at the theatre of San Luca, and that he was going there that evening with his beloved friend. He added that it would cheer

her up to join our party, breathe the air, and divert her spirits at the play. She declined the invitation with civility. He insisted, and called on me to back him up. She looked me in the face, as though to say: "What do you think of the project?" My friend kept his eyes firmly fixed on mine, waiting to detect any sign which might suggest a *No*. I did not like to betray my uneasiness, and felt embarrassed. I thought it sufficient to remark that the lady knew her own mind best; she had refused; therefore she must have good reasons for refusing; I could only approve her decision. "How!" cried my friend, "are you so barbarous as not to give this lady courage to escape for once from her sad solitude? Do you mean to say that we are not persons of honour, to whose protection she can safely confide herself? Answer me that question." "I cannot deny that we are," said I. "Well, then," interposed the coquette upon the moment, much to my surprise, "I am expecting a young woman of my acquaintance, who comes every evening to keep me company, and to sleep with me, during the absence of my husband. We will join you together, masked. Wait for us about two hours after nightfall at the opening of this *calle*."[1] "Excellent!" exclaimed my friend with exultation; "we will pass a merry evening.

[1] The narrow foot-paths between lines of houses at Venice are so called. They frequently have scarcely space enough for two men to walk abreast.

After the comedy we will go to sup at a restaurant. It will not be my fault if we do not shine to-night." I was more dead than alive at this discovery. Yet I tried to keep up the appearance of indifference. Can it be possible, I said in my own heart, that these few hours have sufficed to pervert a young lady whom I have so long known as virtuous? Can these few hours have robbed me of a mistress whom I esteem so highly, who loves me, and who is seeking to win my hand in marriage?

The bargain was concluded, and at the hour appointed we found the two women in masks at the opening of the *calle*. My friend swooped like a falcon on my mistress. I remained to man the other girl. She was a blonde, well in flesh, and far from ugly; but at that moment I did not take thought whether she was male or female. My friend in front kept pouring out a deluge of fine sentiments in whispers, without stopping to draw breath, except when he drew a long sigh. I sighed deeper than he did, and with better reason. Can it be possible, I thought, that yonder heroine will fall into his snare so lightly?

We reached the theatre and entered the box. The blonde gave her whole attention to the play. My friend did not suffer the idol of my heart to listen to a syllable. He kept on breathing into her ear a torrent of seductive poisonous trash. What it was all about I knew not, though I saw her turning red

GOZZI AND HIS FRIENDS' ADVENTURE IN THE CAFÉ LUNA

Original Etching by Ad. Lalauze

and losing self-control. I chafed with rage internally, but pretended to follow the comedy, of which I remember nothing but that it seemed to be interminable. When it was over, we repaired to the Luna—as before, in couples—my friend with my mistress, I with the blonde. I never caught a syllable of the stuff which he dribbled incessantly into his companion's ears. Supper was ordered; a room was placed at our disposal, and candles lighted. My friend, meanwhile, never interrupted his flood of eloquence.

[What ensued justified Gozzi in believing that the lady whom he loved was capable of misconducting herself, and that his friend was ready to take advantage of her levity. While he was chewing the bitter root of disillusionment, she provoked an outburst of jealousy which exposed the situation.]

The ruthless woman came up to me with friendly demonstrations. One of those blind impulses, which it is impossible to control, made me send her reeling three steps backwards. She hung her head, confused with chagrin. My friend looked on in astonishment. The blonde opened her eyes and mouth as wide as she was able. I pulled myself together, ashamed perhaps at having shown my anger; then, as though nothing had happened, I began to complain of the host; "why did he not bring our supper? it was getting late, and the ladies ought to be going home." I noticed that my mistress

shed some furtive tears. Just then the supper was served, and we sat down to table. For me it was nothing better than the banquet of Thyestes. Still I set myself to abusing the comedy, which I had not heard, and the host, and the viands, swallowing a morsel now and then, which tasted in my mouth like arsenic. My friend betrayed a certain perplexity of mind; yet he consumed the food without aversion. My mistress was gloomy, and scarcely raised a mouthful to her lips with trembling fingers. The blonde fell too with a good appetite, and partook of every dish. When the bill was paid, we conducted the ladies back to their house, and wished them good-night.

No sooner were we alone together, than my friend turned to me and said: "It is all your fault. You denied that you were intimate with that young woman. Had you confessed the truth to your friend, he would have respected your amour. It is your fault, and the loss is yours." "What I told you, was the truth," I answered: "but permit me now to tell you another truth. I am sure that she consented to join our company, relying upon me, and on my guarantee—which I gave at your request—that we were honourable men, to whom she could commit herself with safety. I cannot regard it as honourable in a friend to wheedle his comrade into playing the ignoble part which you have thrust upon me." "What twaddle!" exclaimed he. "Between friends

such things are not weighed in your romantic scales. True friendship has nothing to do with passing pleasures of this nature. You have far too sublime a conception of feminine virtue. My opinion is quite different. The most skilful arithmetician could not calculate the number of my conquests. I take my pastime, and let others take theirs." "If a ram could talk," I answered, "and if I were to question him about his love-affairs with the ewes of his flock, he would express precisely the same sentiments as yours." "Well, well!" he retorted: "you are young yet. A few years will teach you that, as regards the sex you reverence, I am a better philosopher than you are. That little blonde, by the way, has taken my fancy. The other woman told me where she lives. To-morrow I mean to attack the fortress, and I will duly report my victory to you." "Go where you like," I said: "but you won't catch me again with women at the play or in a restaurant."

He retired to sleep and dream of the blonde. I went to bed with thoughts gnawing and a tempest in my soul, which kept me wide-awake all night. Early next morning my friend took his walks abroad, and at dinner-time he returned to inform me with amazement that the blonde was an inhuman tigress; all his artifices had not succeeded in subduing her. "She may thank heaven," he continued, "that I must quit Venice to-night. The prudish chatter-box has put me on my mettle. I should like to see

two days pass before I stormed the citadel and made her my victim." He went away, leaving me to the tormenting thoughts which preyed upon my mind.

I was resolved to break at once and for ever with the woman who had been my one delight through a whole year. Yet the image of her beauty, her tenderness, our mutual transports, her modesty and virtue in the midst of self-abandonment to love, assailed my heart and sapped my resolution. I felt it would be some relief to cover her with reproaches. Then the remembrance of the folly to which she had stooped, almost before my very eyes, returned to my assistance, and I was on the point of hating her. Ten days passed in this contention of the spirit, which consumed my flesh. At last one morning the pebble flew into my chamber. I picked it up, without showing my head above the window, and read the scroll it carried. Among the many papers I have committed to the flames, I never had the heart to burn this. The novel and bizzarre self-defence which it contains made it too precious in my judgment. Here, then, I present it in full. Only the spelling has been corrected.

"You are right. I have done wrong, and do not deserve forgiveness. I cannot pretend to have wiped out my sin with ten days of incessant weeping. These tears are sufficiently explained by the sad state in which my husband has returned from Padua, reduced to the last extremity. They will therefore appear

only fitting and proper in the sight of those who may observe them. Alas! would that they were simply shed for my poor dying husband! I cannot say this; and so I have a double crime to make me loathe myself.

"Your friend is a demon, who carried me beyond my senses. He persuaded me that he was so entirely your friend, that if I did not listen to his suit I should affront *you*. You need not believe what seems incredible; yet I swear to God that he confused me so and filled my brain with such strange thoughts that I gave way in blindness, thinking I was paying you a courtesy, knowing not what I was doing, nor that I was plunging into the horrible abyss in which I woke to find myself the moment after I had fallen.

"Leave me to my wretchedness, and shun me. I am unworthy of you; I confess it. I deserve nothing but to die in my despair. Farewell—a terrible farewell! Farewell for ever!"

I could not have conceived it possible that any one should justify such conduct on such grounds. Yet the letter, though it did not change my mind, disturbed my heart. I reflected on her painful circumstances, with her husband at the point of death. It occurred to me that I could at least intervene as a friend, without playing the part of lover any more. Yet I dared not trust myself to meet the woman who for a whole year had been the object of my

burning passion. At the cost of my life, I was resolved to stamp out all emotions for one who had proved herself alien to my way of thinking and of feeling about love. Moreover, I suspected that she might be exaggerating the illness of her husband, in order to mollify me. I subdued my inclinations, and refrained from answering her letter or from seeing her.

The fact is that I soon beheld the funeral procession of her husband pass beneath my windows, with the man himself upon the bier. I could no longer refuse credence to her letter.

This revived my sympathy for the unhappy, desolate, neglected beauty. I was still hesitating, when I met a priest of my acquaintance who told me that he was going to pay a visit of condolence to the youthful widow. "You ought to come with me," said he. "It is an act of piety toward one of your neighbours." I seized the occasion offered, and joined company with the priest.

I found her plunged in affliction, pale, and weeping. No sooner did she set eyes upon me, than she bent her forehead and abandoned herself to tears. "With the escort of this minister of our religion," I began, "I have come to express my sincere sorrow for your loss, and to lay my services at your disposal." Her sobs redoubled; and without lifting her eyes to mine, she broke into these words: "I deserve nothing at your hands." Then a storm of crying and

of sobs interrupted her utterance. My heart was touched. But reason, or hardness, came to my aid. After expressing a few commonplaces, such as are usually employed about the dead, and renewing my proffer of assistance, I departed with the priest.

A full month elapsed before I set eyes on her again. It chanced that I had commissioned a certain tailoress to make me a waistcoat. Meeting me in the road, this woman said that she had lost my measure, and asked whether I would come that evening and let her measure me again. I went, and on entering a room, to which she introduced me, was stupefied to find my mistress sitting there in mourning raiment of black silk.[1] I swear that Andromache, the widow of Hector, was not so lovely as she looked. She rose on my approach, and began to speak: "I know that you have a right to be surprised at my boldness in seeking an occasion to meet with you. I hesitated whether I ought or ought not to communicate a certain matter to you. At last I thought that I should be doing wrong unless I told you. I have received offers of marriage from an honest merchant. You remember what I told you about my father; and now he is moving heaven and earth to get me under his protection with my little property. I sought this opportunity of speaking with you, merely that

[1] One of Pietro Longhi's pictures in the Museo Civico at Venice represents exactly such a scene as this in the workroom of a tailoress. The beau is there, and the woman prepared for flirtation.

I might be able to swear to you by all that is most sacred, that I would gladly refuse any happiness in this life for the felicity of dying in the arms of such a friend as you are. I am well aware that I have forfeited this good fortune; how I hardly know, and by whose fault I could not say. I do not wish to affront you, nor yet the intriguer whom you call your friend; I am ready to take all the blame on my own shoulders. Accept, at any rate, the candid oath which I have uttered, and leave me to my remorseful reflections." Having spoken these words, she resumed her seat and wept. Armed as I was with reason, I confess that she almost made me yield to her seductive graces. I sat down beside her, and taking one of her fair hands in mine, spoke as follows, with perfect kindness: "Think not, dear lady, that I am not deeply moved by your affliction. I am grateful to you for the stratagem by which you contrived this interview. What you have communicated to me with so much feeling not only lays down your line of action; it also suggests my answer. Let us relegate to the chapter of accidental mishaps that fatal occurrence, which will cause me lasting pain, and which remains fixed in my memory. Yet I must tell you that I cannot regard you, after what then happened, as I did formerly. Our union would only make two persons miserable for life. Your good repute with me is in a sanctuary. Accept this advice then from a young man who will be your good friend

to his dying day. Strengthen your mind, and be upon your guard against seducers. The opportunity now offered is excellent; accept at once the proposals of the honest merchant you named to me, and place yourself in safety under his protection."

I did not wait for an answer; but kissed her hand, and took my leave, without speaking about my waistcoat to the tailoress. A few months after this interview she married the merchant. I saw her occasionally in the street together with her husband. She was always beautiful. On recognising me, she used to turn colour and drop her eyes. This is as much as I can relate concerning my third lady-love. It came indeed to my ears, from time to time, without instituting inquiries, that she was well-conducted, discreet, exemplary in all her ways, and that she made an excellent wife to her second husband.

XXXV.

Reflections on the matter contained in the last three chapters, which will be of use to no one.

These three love-affairs, which I have related in all their details, and possibly with indiscreet minuteness, taught me some lessons in life. I experienced them before I had completed my twenty-second year. They transformed me into an Argus, all vigilance

in regard to the fair sex. Meanwhile I possessed a heart in some ways differing from the ordinary; it had suffered by the repeated discovery of faithlessness in women—how much I will not say; it had suffered also by the brusque acts of disengagement, which my solid, resolute, and decided nature forced upon me. The result was that I took good care to keep myself free in the future from any such entanglements.

I was neither voluptuous by temperament nor vicious by habit. My reflective faculties controlled the promptings of appetite. Yet I took pleasure in female society, finding in it an invariable source of genuine refreshment. With the exception of some human weaknesses, of no great moment, to which I yielded in my years of manhood, I have always continued to be the friend and observer of women rather than their passion-blinded lover.

The net result of my observations upon women is this. The love which most of them pretend for men, springs mainly from their vanity or interest. They wish to be surrounded by admirers. They are ambitious to captivate the hearts and heads of people of importance, in order to reign as petty queens, to take the lead, to exercise power, to levy contributions. Or else they ensnare slaves devoted to them, free-handed managers of theatres, men who will give them the means at balls, at *petits soupers*, at country-houses, at great entertainments, to eclipse

their rivals, to acquire new lovers, and to betray their faithful servant, their credulous accomplice in this game of fashion. Again, they are sometimes spreading nets to catch a complaisant husband, who will support them in their intrigues.

I was not born to pay court. My position in the world was not so eminent as to secure a woman's triumph by my influence. I was neither wealthy enough nor extravagant enough to satisfy a woman's whims in those ridiculous displays which make her the just object of disdainful satire. I had no inclination to ruin myself either in my fortune or in my health. I had conceived a sublime and romantic ideal of the possibilities of love. Matrimony was wholly alien to my views of liberty. The consequence was that, after these three earliest experiences, I regarded the sex with eyes of a philosopher.

I enjoyed the acquaintance of many women in private life, and of many actresses, remarkable for charm and beauty. Holding the principles I have described, I found them well contented with my manners of behaviour. They showed themselves capable of honourable, grateful, and constant friendship through a long course of years. In truth, it is in the main to men—to men who flatter and caress the innate foibles of women, their vanity, their tenderness, their levity, that we must ascribe the frequency of female frailties.

In conclusion, I will lift my voice to affirm this

truth about myself. Without denying that I have yielded, now and then, but rarely, to some trivial weakness of our human nature, I protest that I have never corrupted a woman's thoughts with sophisms. I have never sapped the principles of a sound education. I have never exposed the duties and obligations of their sex to ridicule, by clothing license with the name of liberty. I have never stigmatised the bonds of religion, the conjugal tie, modesty, chastity, decent self-respect, with the title of prejudice—reversing the real meaning of that word, as is the wont of self-styled philosophers, who are a very source of infection to the age we live in.

Here, then, I leave with you the candid and public confession of my loves.[1] I have related the circumstances of my birth, my education, my travels, my friendships, my engrossing occupations, my literary quarrels, my amorous adventures. It is for you to take them as you find them. I have written them down at the dictation of mere truth. They are *useless*, I know, and I only *publish* them in obedience to the virtue of *humility*.

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[1] Gozzi had a distinct object in writing these chapters on his love-affairs. Gratarol's accusation of his having been a hypocrite and covert libertine lay before him. He wished to make a clean breast of his frailties. To suppress this portion of his *apologia pro vitâ suâ* would have been to do him grave injustice. The *Memorie* must always be read as an answer to Gratarol's *Narrazione*. See Introduction, Part i.

XXXVI.

On the absurdities and contrarieties to which my star has made me subject.

I wrote the useless memoirs of my life in 1780, down to the age I had attained in that year; but now that I still find myself alive in 1797, the vice of scribbling being in my case incorrigible, I am wasting some more pages on useless memoirs subsequent to that date, and am giving these in their turn to the public from a motive of humility.

If I were to narrate all the whimsical absurdities and all the untoward accidents to which my luckless star exposed me, I should have a lengthy business on my hands. They were of almost daily occurrence. Those alone which I meekly endured through the behaviour of servants in my employ, would be enough to fill a volume, and the anecdotes would furnish matter for madness or laughter.

I will content myself with mentioning one singularity, which was annoying, dangerous, and absurd at the same time. Over and over again have I been mistaken by all sorts of people for some one not myself; and the drollest point is that, in spite of their obstinate persistence, I was not in the least like the persons they took me for. One day I met

an old artisan at San Pavolo, who ran to meet me, bent down and kissed the hem of my garment with tears, thanking me with all his heart for having been the cause of liberating his son from prison through my influence. I told him firmly that he did not know me, and that he was mistaking me for some one else. He maintained with great warmth and assurance that he knew me, and that I was his kind master Paruta. I perceived that he took me for a Venetian patrician of that name, but I vainly strove to disabuse him. The good man, thinking perhaps that I denied the title of Paruta in order to escape his thanks, followed me a long way with a perfect storm of blessings, vowing to pray to God until his dying day for my happiness and for that of the whole Paruta family. I asked a friend who knew the nobleman in question if I resembled him. He replied that Paruta was lean, tall, very lightly built, with thin legs and a pale face, and that he had not the least similarity to me.

Everybody knows or did know Michele dall' Agata, the celebrated impresario of the opera;[1] it is notorious that the fellow was a good span shorter than me, two palms broader, and wholly different in dress and personal appearance. Well, through a tedious course of years, as long as this man lived, it was my misfortune to be stopped upon the road almost every

[1] There is a good deal said about this man in Casanova's Memoirs.

day, by singers and dancers of both sexes, by chapel-masters, tailors, painters, letter-carriers, &c., all of whom mistook me for Michele. I had to listen to interminable complaints, lengthy expressions of gratitude, inquiries after lodgings, grumblings about meagre decorations and scanty wardrobes. From the letter-carriers I had, over and over again, to refuse letters and parcels addressed to Michele dall' Agata, screaming, protesting, swearing that I was not Michele. All these persons, when they reluctantly at last took leave, turned back from time to time and stared at me, like men bereft of sense, showing their firm conviction that I *was* Michele, who had reasons for not wishing to *appear* Michele. One summer, on reaching Padua, I learned that Signora Maria Canziani, an excellent and well-conducted dancer, and my good friend, had lately been confined. I wished to pay her a visit, and inquired from a woman at her lodgings if I might be introduced into her room. She responded with these words addressed to her mistress: "Madam, Signor Michele dall' Agata is waiting outside, and would like to offer his respects to you." When I entered the apartment, poor Canziani burst into such peals of laughter at the woman's blunder that I thought she must have died. Having paid this visit, I chanced to meet the celebrated professor of astronomy, Toaldo, on the bridge of San Lorenzo. He knew me perfectly, and I knew him as well. I bowed; he looked me in the face,

lifted his hat with gravity, and passed onwards, saying: "Addio Michele!" The continual persistence of this error almost brought me to imagine that I was Michele. If Michele had earned the ill-will of brutal and revengeful enemies, this mistaken identity would certainly have been for me no laughing matter.

One very hot evening, when the splendour of the moon was turning night into day, I went abroad to take the air, and was conversing with the patrician Francesco Gritti on the piazza of San Marco. I heard a voice behind me saying: "What are you doing here at this hour? Why don't you go to bed and sleep, you ass?" These words were accompanied with two smart raps upon my back. I turned to resent the affront, and found myself facing the patrician Cavaliere Andrea Gradenigo, who gazed fixedly at me, and then exclaimed: "Pray pardon me! I could have sworn that you were Daniele Zanchi." Some explanations and excuses followed regarding the cuffs and the title of ass, which I had got through being taken for a Daniele. The cavaliere, it seems, was familiar enough with this fellow to call him ass and give him a couple of thwacks in sign of amicable pleasantry.

Not less whimsical was the following incident of the same description. I happened to be talking one very fine day with my friend Carlo Andrich on the Piazza di San Marco, when I observed a Greek, with

mustachios, long coat, and red cap, who had with him a boy dressed in the same costume. When he saw me, the Greek ran up to us, exhibiting ecstatic signs of joy. After embracing and kissing me with rapture, he turned to the boy and said: "Come, lad, and kiss the hand here of your uncle Costantino." The boy seized and kissed my hand. Carlo Andrich stared at me; I stared at Carlo Andrich: we were like a pair of images. At length I asked the Greek for whom he took me. "What a joke!" said he; "aren't you my dear friend Costantino Zucalà?" Andrich held his sides to save himself from bursting, and it took me seven minutes to persuade the Greek that I was not Signor Constantino Zucalà. On making inquiries with people who knew Signor Zucalà, I was assured that this worthy merchant was a short fat man, without one grain of resemblance to myself.

I shall probably have wearied out my readers by relating the hundredth part of such occurrences. I will now glance at the hundredth part of the contretemps which were continually annoying me.

In winter or in spring, in summer or in autumn, the same thing always happened. If I chanced to be caught by some sudden unexpected downpour, I might kick my heels as long as I liked under a colonnade or in a shop, waiting till the rain stopped and I could get home dry; but not on one single occasion did I ever have the consolation of seeing

out the deluge; on the contrary, it invariably redoubled in fury, as though to spite me. Goaded at last by the nuisance of this eternal useless waiting, fretful and eager to find myself at home, I exposed myself in all meekness to the deluge, and reached my dwelling wet to the skin, dripping with water. But no sooner had I arrived in this pitiful plight, unlocked the door, and taken shelter, than the clouds rolled by and the sun began to show his face, just as though he meant to laugh at my discomfort.

Eight times out of ten, through the whole course of my life, when I hoped to be alone, and to occupy my leisure with reading or writing for my own distraction and amusement, letters or unexpected visitors, more tiresome even than worrying thoughts or importunate letters, would come to interrupt me and put my patience on the rack. Eight times out of ten, since I began to shave, no sooner had I set myself before the looking-glass, than people arrived in urgent haste to speak with me on business, or persons of importance, whom I could not keep waiting in the ante-chamber. I had to wash the soap-suds from my face, and leave my room half-shaved, to listen to such folk on business, or to people of quality whom good manners forced me to oblige.

What I am going to relate is hardly decent, yet I shall tell it, because it is the simple truth, and furnishes a good example of these persecuting contrarieties. Almost every time when a sudden

necessity has compelled me to seek some lonely corner in a street, a door is sure to open, and a couple of ladies appear. In a hurry I run up another blind alley, and lo and behold another pair of ladies make their entrance on the scene. The result is, that I am compelled to dodge from pillar to post, suffering the gravest inconveniences, to which my modesty exposes me. These, however, are but trifles, mere irritating gnat-bites.

Those who have the patience to read the remaining chapters of my insipid Memoirs, will admit that the evil star of these untoward circumstances never ceased to plague me. Certainly the troubles in which poor Pietro Antonio Gratarol, for whom I was sincerely sorry, involved me by his strange behaviour, were not slight or inconsiderable.

I think that the following incident is sufficiently comic to be worth narration. I was living in the house of my ancestors, in the Calle della Regina at S. Cassiano. The house was very large, and I was its sole inhabitant; for my two brothers, Francesco and Almorò, had both married and settled in Friuli, leaving me this mansion as part of my inheritance. During the summer months, when people quit the city for the country, I used also to visit Friuli. I was in the habit of leaving the keys of my house with a corn-merchant, my neighbour, and a very honest man. It chanced one autumn, through one of the tricks my evil fortune never ceased to play,

that rains and inundations kept me in Friuli longer than usual, far indeed into November. Snow upon the mountains, and the winds which brought fine weather, caused an intense cold. I travelled toward Venice, well enveloped in furs, traversing deep bogs, floundering through pitfalls in the road, and crossing streams in flood. At last, one hour after nightfall, I arrived, half dead with the discomforts of the journey, congealed, fatigued, and wanting sleep. I left my boat at the post-house near S. Cassiano, made a porter shoulder my portmanteau, and a servant take my hat-box under his arm. Then I set off home, wrapped up in my pelisse, all anxiety to put myself into a well-warmed bed. When we reached the Calle della Regina, we found it so crowded with people in masks and folk of all sexes, that it was quite impossible for my two attendants with their burdens to push a way to my house-door. "What the devil is the meaning of this crowd?" I asked a bystander. "The patrician Bragadino has been made Patriarch of Venice to-day," was the man's reply. "They are illuminating and keeping open-house; doles of bread, wine, and money are being given to the people for three days. This is the reason of the enormous crowd." On reflecting that the door of my house was close to the bridge by which one passes to the Campo di Santa Maria Mater Domini, I thought that, by making a turn round the Calle called del Ravano, I

might be able to get out into the Campo, then cross the bridge, and effect an entrance into my abode.[1] I accomplished this long detour together with the bearers of my luggage; but when I reached the Campo, I was struck dumb with astonishment at the sight of my windows thrown wide open, and my whole house adorned with lustres, ablaze with wax-candles, burning like the palace of the sun. After standing half a quarter of an hour agaze with my mouth open to contemplate this prodigy, I shook myself together, took heart of courage, crossed the bridge, and knocked loudly at my door. It opened, and two of the city guards presented themselves, pointing their spontoons at my breast, and crying, with fierceness written on their faces: "There is no road this way." "How!" exclaimed I, still more dumbfounded, and in a gentle tone of voice: "why can I not get in here?" "No, sir," the terrible fellows answered; "there is no approach by this door. Take the trouble to put on a mask, and seek an entrance by the great gate which you see there on the right hand, the gate of the Palazzo Bragadino. Wearing a mask you will be permitted to pass in by that door to the feast." "But supposing I were the

[1] The translator of this narrative has taken the trouble to make this tedious detour on foot. The quarter in which Gozzi lived, remains exactly in the same condition as when he described it. His old palace has not altered; and the whole of the above scene can be vividly presented to the fancy by an inspection of the localities.

master of this house, and had come home tired from a journey, half-frozen, and dropping with sleep, could I not get into my own house and lay myself down in my bed?" This I said with all the phlegm imaginable. "Ah! the master?" replied those truculent sentinels: "please to wait, and you will receive an answer." With these words they shut the door stormily in my face. I gazed, like a man deprived of his senses, at the porter and the servant. The porter, bending beneath his load, and the servant looked at me like men bewitched. At last the door opened again, and a majordomo, all laced with gold, appeared upon the threshold. Making many bows and inclinations of the body, he invited me to enter. I did so, and passing up the staircase, asked that reverend personage what was the enchantment which had fallen on my dwelling. "So! you know nothing then?" he answered. "My master, the patrician Gasparo Bragadino, foreseeing that his brother would be elected Patriarch, and wanting room for the usual public festival, was desirous of uniting this house to his own by a little bridge of communication thrown across the windows. The scheme was executed with your consent. It is here that a part of the feast is being celebrated, and bread and money thrown from the windows to the people. All the same, you need not fear lest the room in which you sleep has not been carefully reserved and closed with scrupulous attention. Come with me, come with me, and you

shall soon see for yourself." I remained still more confounded by this news of a permission, which no one had demanded, and which I had not given. However, I did not care to exchange words with a majordomo about that. When I came into the hall, I was dazzled by the huge wax-candles burning, and stunned by the servants and the masks hurrying to and fro and making a mighty tumult. The noise in the kitchen attracted me to that part of the house, and I saw a huge fire, at which pots, kettles, and pipkins were boiling, while a long spit loaded with turkeys, joints of veal, and other meats, was turning round. The majordomo ceremoniously kept entreating me, meanwhile, to visit my bedroom, which had been so carefully reserved and locked for me. "Please tell me, sir," I said, "how late into the night this din will last?" "To speak the truth," he answered, "it will be kept up till daybreak for three consecutive nights." "It is a great pleasure to me," I said, "to possess anything in the world which could be of service to the Bragadino family. This circumstance has conferred honour on me. Pray make my compliments to their Excellencies. I shall go at once to find a lodging for the three days and three consecutive nights, being terribly in need of rest and quiet." "Out upon it!" replied the majordomo, "you really must stay here, and take repose in your own house, in the room reserved with such great care for you." "No, certainly not," I said. "I thank you for your

courteous pains in my behalf. But how would you have me sleep in the midst of this uproar? My slumber is somewhat of the lightest." Then, bidding the porter and the servant follow me, I went to spend the three days and the three consecutive nights in patience at an inn.

Having slept off my fatigue that night, I paid a visit of congratulation to the Cavaliere Bragadino on the elevation of his brother to the Patriarchate. He received me with the utmost affability; expressed annoyance at what he had learned from his major-domo, and told me with the most open candour that the patrician Count Ignazio Barziza had positively dispatched a courier with a letter to me in Friuli, begging permission to use my mansion for the feast-days of the Patriarch, and that I had by my answer given full consent. To this I replied that in truth I had seen neither messenger nor letters, but that he had done me the greatest pleasure by making use of my poor dwelling. Wishing higher honours to his family, I added that if such should befall, without seeking the intervention of Count Barziza, he was at liberty to throw my doors and windows open and freely to avail himself of my abode. Take this affair as you choose, it earned for me the estimable good-will of the patrician Bragadino, caused me to sojourn three days and three nights in an inn, and gave me occasion to relate one of my innumerable contre-temps.

If I were to expand this chapter with an account of all the contrarieties I suffered as a house-owner in Venice, it would grow into a volume.[1] Having to reside in the city, I judged it prudent to take our property there in exchange for some farms in Friuli. I very soon perceived that the advantage of this barter fell to my brothers Francesco and Almorò. My tenants refused to pay their rents, and made perpetual demands for alterations and repairs. Masons, carpenters, glaziers, smiths, pavement-layers, emptiers of cesspools, ate up a third of my revenues. Law-suits to recover arrears devoured a large part of the remaining two-thirds. Bad debts, empty houses, and taxes reduced the total to a bare fifth. Beside this annual loss to my pocket, I was driven to my wits' ends by the vagaries of the tenants.

I will select two examples. One day a woman of respectable appearance came, and asked for the lease of an empty house I had on the Giudecca. I granted her request, and she paid the first instalment of her rent. After this first payment, all my clamours, demands for arrears, and menaces were thrown to the winds. She actually inhabited my house for three years, and discharged her obligations with the coin of promises and sometimes insults. I offered to make her a free present of her debt if she would only decamp. This roused her to a state of fury.

[1] The following paragraphs, to the end of the chapter, are extracted and condensed from vol. iii. chap. v. of the *Memorie*.

"Was she not a woman of honour?" she exclaimed: "she was wont to pay up punctually, and not to accept alms." At last I had recourse to the Avvogadori, one of whom sent for the woman, endured her chatter, and intimated that she must give the house up at the expiration of eight days. Accordingly, I went to take possession of my property; but no!—there was the woman, comfortably ensconced with her own family, as though the house belonged to her. Again I applied to the court. Bailiffs were dispatched, who turned my tenants with their furniture into the streets. The keys of the house were placed in my hands, and I crossed over to the Giudecca to inspect the damaged tenement, of which, at last, I felt myself once more the owner. Vain error! That heroic woman, at the head of her family, had scaled the walls of the fortress by a ladder, entered through a window, and encamped herself in the middle of the conquered citadel. I need not add that I finally got rid of this tormenting gadfly. But what a state the house was in! No locks, no bolts, no doors, no windows; everything reduced to desolation.

On another occasion I happened to have a house empty at S. Maria Mater Domini. One morning a man, who had the dress and appearance of a gondolier, presented himself. He informed me that he was a gondolier in the service of a cittadino at S. Jacopo dall' Orio. His own abode was at S. Geremia; and the great distance from his master's dwelling made

his service difficult. My house at S. Maria would exactly suit him; the money for the first instalment of the rent was ready, if I would take him as a tenant. "What is your name?" I asked. "Domenico Bianchi." "And your master's?" "Signor Colombo." "Very well," said I; "I shall make inquiries of your master; for I have so often got into hot water that I am even afraid of cold." He urged me not to postpone matters; his wife was expecting her confinement every hour; it was of the utmost importance that he should be able to install her at once in their new abode. "Well, well," said I, "you don't suppose that she will be laid-in this afternoon, do you? I will go to Signor Colombo after dinner; and if his report of you is satisfactory, you may take the keys as early as you like to-morrow." "You are right," replied the fellow; "although I know myself to be an honest man, I do not pretend that you should not inquire into my character. Only pray be quick about the business."

With this he went away; but scarcely had I dined, when the gondolier reappeared, leading by the hand a young woman. Half in tears, he began as follows: "Here is my poor wife in the first pangs of labour. For the love of Jesus, let us into your house. I am afraid it is already too late, and that she will be confined upon the street." As a matter of fact, the young person showed by her figure, and by the extraordinary contortions of her face and body,

that what he said was the truth. Mortally afraid that she might not be able to leave my mansion, I rushed to the writing-table, scribbled out an agreement, took the customary month's payment, and sent the couple off with the keys of my house.

Some weeks later on, the parish priest of S. Maria arrived all fuming with excitement, and cried out: "To whom the devil have you let your house in such-and-such a street?" "To a certain Domenico Bianchi, the gondolier of the Colombo family, whose wife was on the point of being confined." "What Domenico Bianchi? What Colombo? What gondolier? What wife?" exclaimed he in still greater heat. "The fellow keeps a disorderly house; and she is one of his hussies. When they came to you, she had a cushion stuffed beneath her clothes. They sell wine, draw all the disreputable people of the quarter together, and are the scandal of my parish. If you do not immediately get rid of the nuisance, you will be guilty of a mortal sin." I calmed him down, and made him laugh by the account I gave him of my interview with the *soi-disant* married couple. Then I promised to dislodge the people on the spot.

This was sooner said than done. I first applied to the Avvogadori, who washed their hands of the affair. Then I begged the priest to lay an information before the Esecutori contro la Bestemmia.[1] He positively

[1] A magistracy composed of four patricians, who controlled the manners of the town in matters of lawless and indecent living.

refused, telling me that loose women were only too powerfully protected at Venice, and that he had already burned his fingers on a previous occasion by proceeding against a notorious evil-liver. It was no business of his, and I must get out of the scrape as well as I could.

To cut the story short, I was eventually relieved by my friend Paolo Balbi, who applied the following summary but efficacious remedy. "I informed Messer Grande of your affair,"[1] said Balbi, while explaining his proceedings: "he, as you are well aware, commands the whole tribe of constables and tipstaves; and I begged him to find some way of ousting the *canaille* from your house. Messer Grande dispatched one of his myrmidons, one who knows these hussies, to tell them, under the pretext of a charitable warning, that the chief of the police had orders to take them all up and send them handcuffed to prison. In their fright, the nest of rogues dispersed and left the quarter." After laughing heartily over the affair, and thanking my good friend, I walked home, reflecting deeply on red tape in public offices, perversions of legal justice, and the high-handed proceedings of that generous and expeditious judge, *Messer Grande*.[2]

[1] Messer Grande corresponded to the Bargello at Rome, and was the chief of catchpoles and constables.

[2] This chapter on Gozzi's contrarieties, which I have supplemented with a few passages from the incoherent notes at the end of the *Memorie*, has received undue attention from Paul de Musset and critics who adopt his untrustworthy version of Gozzi's autobiography. De Musset strove to base upon it a theory that Gozzi was the victim of his own fabulous sprites. See Introduction, vol. i. p. 23.

XXXVII.

A review of the origin and progress of the literary quarrels in which I was engaged.—Also of the foundation of the Accademia Granellesca.—A diatribe on prejudice.—Father Bettinelli.

The introduction to the first volume of my dramatic caprices (published in 1772) gave a sufficiently full account of the dates and origins of my ten *Fiabe Teatrali*, together with some notice of the literary quarrels which occasioned them.[1] Yet I find it necessary to pass these matters once more in review, since they concerned me not a little for the space of twenty-five years and more, and have consequently much to do with my Memoirs.

Here then are the steps which led me to bring those poetical extravagances on the stage—extravagances which I never sought to value or have valued at more than their true worth—which never had, or have, or will have detractors among real lovers of literature—which always had, and have, and will have the entire population of great cities for their friends—which made, and make, and will for ever make a certain sort of self-styled *literati* mad

[1] Gozzi alludes to the *Ragionamento Ingenuo* prefixed to the first volume of Colombani's edition of his works.

with rage—Here then, as I said, are the steps which led me to their publication.

I must begin by confessing three weaknesses, which pertained to my way of looking upon literature.

In the first place, I resented the ruin of Italian poetry, established in the thirteenth century, fortified and strengthened in the fourteenth, somewhat shaken in the fifteenth, revived and consolidated in the sixteenth by so many noble writers, spoiled in the seventeenth, rehabilitated at the end of the last and at the beginning of the present eighteenth century, then given over to the dogs and utterly corrupted by a band of blustering fanatics during the period which we are doomed to live in. These men, who have wrought the ruin I resent by their pretence to be original, by their habit of damning our real masters and institutors in the art of writing as puerile and frigid pedants,—these men who lead the youth astray from solid methods and praiseworthy simplicity, incite them to trample under foot whatever in past centuries was venerated like the angel who conducted young Tobias, hurl them with hungry and devouring intellects into the gulf of entities which have no actual existence—these men, I say, have turned a multitude of hopeful neophytes, if only they were guided by sound principles, into mere visionary fools and the demoniacs of spurious inspiration.

In the second place, I resented the decadence of our Italian language and the usurpations of sheer

ignorance upon its purity. Purity of diction I regarded as indispensable to plain harmonious beauty of expression, to felicitous development of thought, to just illumination of ideas, and to the proper colouring of sentiment, especially in works of wit and genius in our idiom.

In the third place, I resented the extinction of all sense for proportion and propriety in style, that sense which prompts us to treat matters sublime, familiar, and facetious upon various planes and in different keys of feeling, whether the vehicle employed be verse or prose. Instead of this, one monstrous style, now bombastically turgid, now stupidly commonplace, has become the fashion for everything which is written or sent to press, from the weightiest of arguments down to the daily letter which a fellow scribbles to his mistress.

Let it not be supposed, however, that my resentment against these literary curses of our century—for such I thought them—ever goaded me beyond my naturally jesting humour. All the compositions I have printed on the topics in dispute, regarding purity of diction, ancient authors, and the corrupters of young minds in Italy, witness to my joviality and coolness in the zeal and ardour of the conflict.

Finally, I must confess that all my endeavours in the good cause, joined to those of others, have been impotent to stem the tide of extravagance, the exaltation of heated brains, the absurdities of so-called

philosophical reforms; also, as regards the purity of Italian diction, all that we have said and written has been thrown away. The charlatans have had the upper hand of us, by persuading the vast multitude of working brains that to seek purity in language is a waste of time and hide-bound imbecility, and that to spare the pains of gaining it is a mark of free and liberal talent. The remedy must be left to time and to the inscrutable ebb and flow of fashion, which makes the world at one time eager for the true, at another no less eager for the false, in spite of any human efforts to control it.

It was about the year 1740, when an Academy was founded in Venice by some people of gay humour, versed in literary studies, and amateurs of polish and simplicity and nature. Caprice and chance brought us together. But we followed in the wake of Chiabrera, Redi, Zeno, Manfredi, Lazarini, valiant predecessors in the warfare against those false, emphatic, metaphorical, and figured fashions, which had been introduced like plague-germs by the Seicentisti.[1] This Academy imbued the minds of young men with higher ideas, and fostered the seeds it planted by a generous emulation.

The lively and learned little band happened to alight upon a simpleton called Giuseppe Secchellari, who had been bamboozled by his own vanity and

[1] That is, the authors of the seventeenth century, during which an extravagant and affected style prevailed in Italy.

the cozenage of merry knaves agog for fun into thinking himself a man of profound erudition, and who accordingly blackened reams of paper with ineptitudes and blunders so ridiculous that nobody could listen to them without fits of laughter. It was decided to elect this queer fish Prince of the Academy. The election took place unanimously amid shouts of merriment. He was dubbed Arcigranellone, and received the title of Prince of the Accademia Granellesca, by which names he and the club were henceforth to be known.[1]

A solemn coronation of this precious simpleton with a wreath of plums followed in due course. All the Academicians were grouped around him, and nothing could be more burlesque than his proud satisfaction at the honours he received, the air and grace with which he thanked us for some thirty odes and rigmaroles, which were really witty squibs and gibes upon our princely butt, and which he took for panegyrics.

A large arm-chair of antique build and very high, so high that the dwarfish Prince had to take two or

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[1] These names require explanation. *Granelli*, *coglioni*, and *testicoli* are words for the same things, and have the secondary meaning of *simpleton*. Thus *Arcigranellone* is the Arch-big-simpleton. The crest of the Academy carries an allusion to the same things. Apropos of this not very edifying topic, it is worth mentioning that the canting arms of the noble Bergamasque family of Coglioni consisted of three *granelli* counterchanged upon a field party per fesse gules and argent. I cannot recall a parallel instance in heraldry.

three jumps before he leaped into it, was the throne from which he lorded over us. There he sat and swaggered, having been gulled into thinking it the chair of Cardinal Pietro Bembo, that renowned and illustrious author. An owl with two balls in its right claw stood over him, and was the object of his veneration as the crest of the Academy. Perched there aloft, he used to draw from his bosom a roll of papers, and recited in a quavering falsetto some preposterous gibberish or other which he styled a dissertation. After a few lines had been declaimed, the clapping of hands and mocking plaudits of his audience brought him to a pause. Fully persuaded that he had entranced his hearers, he then handed his manuscripts with majestic condescension to the secretary, and bade him enroll them in the archives of the Academy.

When we met together in the heat of summer, iced drinks were handed round to the members; but the prince, to mark his superiority, received a bowl of boiling tea upon a silver salver. In the depth of winter, on the other hand, hot coffee was served out to us and iced water to the Prince. The venerable Arcigranellone, puffed up with this distinction, swallowed the tea in summer and the water in winter, dissolving into sweat or shivering with cold according to the season.

I could not reckon all the pleasantries, for ever new and always witty, which we played off upon

our Prince, and which his stupid vanity made him accept as honours. Each time the Academy met, these diversions acted like an antidote to melancholy. And since he never would admit that he was ignorant of anything a member asked, at one time he was made to rhyme extempore, at another to sing a song, and sometimes even to descend and strip to the shirt and fence with a master in the noble art, who rained down whacks with the foil upon his hide and sent him spinning like a peg-top round the room. Arcigranellone as he truly was, the man essayed everything, and never failed to triumph in the deafening derisive plaudits which he raised.

This novel kind of Calandrino,[1] of whom I am sketching a mere outline, served chiefly as a lure to young men who care more for mirth than serious scholarship, and drew them to enroll themselves with zeal beneath the banner of the owl.

When we had amused ourselves enough, at the commencement of our sessions, with the marvellous diatribes, wholly unexpected answers, and harlequinesque contortions of our Arcigranellone, we left him up there alone upon the chair of Bembo, and drew from our portfolios compositions in prose and verse, serious or facetious as the theme might be, but sensible, judicious, elegant in phrase, varied in style, and correct in diction. An agreeable read-

[1] Calandrino was a famous fool and butt in the *Decameron* of Boccaccio.

ing followed, which entertained the audience for at least two hours. Each reader, when he had finished his recitation, turned to the Arcigranellone, whose whimsical opinions and distorted reasonings renewed the clatter of tongues and laughter.

This serio-comic Academy had for its object to promote the study of our best old authors, the simplicity and harmony of chastened style, and above all the purity of the Italian tongue. It drew together a very large number of young men emulous of these things; and few foreigners of culture came to Venice without seeking to be admitted to its sessions. I shall not attempt to catalogue the names of its innumerable members. But I may observe that many names might be found upon our books whose owners had no inkling of the fact; for the following reason. Some of our merriest wags used to amuse themselves and the company by inflating the Arcigranellone's vanity with burlesque epistles addressed to him by very exalted personages. These great people wrote to say that, induced by the renown of his learning, wise rule, and sublime administration of his principality, they begged to be inscribed by him upon the list of his fortunate subjects, the Academicians. In this way it came about that Frederick II. of Prussia, the Sultan, the Sophy of Persia, Prester John, and other notables of like eminence, appeared among us on paper. All the members, I ought to mention, had an academical

name assigned to them and published by his Magnificence the Prince. I was dubbed the Solitary.

The compositions produced in our Academy were candidly exposed to criticism; and, after receiving polish at the hands of accomplished scholars in the club, many works of style and value, in all kinds of verse and prose, went forth to the world. Serious poems, humorous poems, satires in the manner of Berni, Horatian satires with the masculine and trenchant phrase of ancient Rome, orations on occasions of importance in the State, dissertations in defence of the great masters of Italian literature, commentaries upon Dante, novellettes in graceful diction, familiar letters, volumes of occasional and moral essays, Latin verses and prose exercises, translations from choice books in foreign languages; all these, after passing the review of the Academicians, were sent to press. I need not speak further about what has become common property through publication.

Perhaps I shall be accused by modern innovators of seeking to attach importance to frivolities. That will not hurt me. Those are far more hurt and wounded who allow themselves to be seduced into believing that the works of these same innovators contain things better worth their notice than frivolities—uncouth frivolities, ill-thought, unnatural, and written in a monstrous jargon.

Who could have imagined that a single word,

wrested from its proper sense, made common in the mouths of boys and women to denote what does not suit their inclinations, should have the power to turn established rules—based on the experience of sages, and confirmed by ancient usage—all topsy-turvy? This word is nothing more nor less, in naked truth, than—*prejudice*.[1]

I have just said that the word in question has been wrested from its proper meaning; and I am prepared to maintain this proposition. According to my principles, which will have to bear the shame of being stigmatised as *prejudices* by the innovators, it is impossible to apply the term 'prejudice' to things which are not only harmless, but beneficial, nay, necessary to the totality of mankind.

Now I am bound to believe that religion and its

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[1] What follows in the text above might be largely illustrated. It is curious to find Casanova, for example, agreeing with Gozzi on a point of morality: "Une méchante philosophie," he says, "diminue trop le nombre de ce qu'on appelle préjugés" (vol. i. p. 97). Compare the ludicrous account of the rogue Squaldo-Nobili, who shared Casanova's prison in S. Mark, and who had purged himself of prejudice by reading *La Sagesse de Charon* (vol. iii. p. 70). While I am writing, an article by M. Emile de Laveleye on "How bad books may destroy States" (*Pall Mall Gazette*, June 9, 1888) falls into my hands with a pertinent passage, which I shall here extract:—

"The following are the terms in which, in an eighteenth century romance, Count Clitandre explains to the Marquise Cidalise all the services that philosophy has rendered to refined and elegant society. 'Thanks to philosophy,' he says, 'we have the happiness to have found the truth, and what does not this entail for us? Women have never been less prudish under pretext of duty, and there has never been so little affectation of virtue. A man and a woman please each other and a

accessories are beneficial to society and nations. But our new-fangled philosophers have dubbed all these things the prejudices of intellects enfeebled and intimidated by seductive superstition. Consequently, religion, that salutary curb on human passion, has languished and become a laughing-stock.

I am bound to believe that the gallows is beneficial to society, being an instrument for punishing crime and deterring would-be criminals. But our new-fangled philosophers have denounced the gallows as a tyrannical prejudice, and by so doing have multiplied murders on the highway, robberies and acts of sacrilege, a hundred-fold.

I am bound to believe that heroism, probity, good faith and equity are beneficial to society. But our unprejudiced philosophers, who identify felicity with

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liaison is formed ; they tire of it, and separate with as little ceremony as they commenced it ; if they come again to regret the separation, their former relations may recommence, and with the same enthusiasm as the first time. These again cease ; and all this takes place without any quarrellings or disputes ! It is true that there has been no question whatever of *love;* but after all, what is *love* save a mere desire that people chose to exaggerate, a physical sentiment of which men, in their vanity, chose to make a virtue ? Nowadays the desire alone exists, and if people, in their mutual relations, speak of love, it is not because they really believe in it, but because it is a politer way of obtaining what they reciprocally wish for. As there has been no question of love at the onset, there is no hatred at parting, and from the slight liking mutually inspired rests a mutual desire and readiness to oblige each other. I think, all things considered, that it is wise to sacrifice to so much pleasure a few old-fashioned prejudices which bring but little esteem and an infinite amount of worry to those who still make them their rule of conduct.'"

enjoyment and getting hold by any means of what you can, call these virtues mere romantic prejudices. Accordingly, justice has been sold with brazen impudence, knaveries and tricks and treachery have triumphed, and a multitude of simple, innocent, down-trodden creatures, poor in spirit and impoverished in substance, have wept tears of blood.

It was pronounced a musty and barbarous prejudice to keep women at home, for the supervision of their sons and daughters, their hirelings, their domestic service and economy. Immediately, the women poured forth from their doors, storming like Bacchantes, screaming out "Liberty! liberty!" The streets swarmed with them. Their children, servants, daily duties, were neglected. They meanwhile abandoned their vapoury brains to fashions, frivolous inventions, rivalries in games, amusements, loves, coquetries, and all sorts of nonsense which their own caprices and their counsellors, the upstart sages, could suggest. The husbands had not courage to oppose this ruin of their honour, of their substance, of their families. They were afraid of being pilloried with that dreadful word, prejudice.

The law which punishes infanticide with death was styled a prejudice. Good morals, modesty, and chastity received the name of prejudice—enforced, so ran the tale, by bugbears of the Levites and the foolish training of poor superstitious females. What the result was, I blush to record. The infinite ad-

vantages conferred upon society and families by these fine philosophical discoveries, and by their triumph over prejudices of the sort I have described, had better remain unwritten.

The few who stood aloof and mocked at fashions —fashions which fade and fall each year like autumn leaves—were quizzed as ignoramuses, blockheads, zanies tainted with the leprosy of prejudice.[1] They passed for stolid, coarse-grained creatures, void of thrill, of sentiment, of taste, of culture, delicacy, and refined perception. Women and men, in one vast herd, became illuminated visionaries. They piqued themselves upon their intuition and originality. They discovered endless harmonies and discords, all imaginary; endless comforts and discomforts, all imaginary; endless imaginary savours, insipidities, depravities in things about them, in furniture, in dress, in colours, in decorations, in the kitchen, in food, in wine, in dressing of the table, all imaginary. They detected elegance or inelegance in every dumb and senseless object: down to the basest of utensils there was nothing which escaped the epithet of elegant. Let thus much be said for truth's sake, with the patience which is needful nowadays in speaking truth to folk infected by the real and not the spurious leprosy of prejudice.

Well, when all the so-called prejudices which I

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[1] This paragraph reads amusingly like a satire upon English "æsthetes."

have just described had been put to flight and dissipated by the piercing sunbeams of the innovators, many great and remarkable blessings appeared in their room. These were the blessings of irreligion, of respect and reverence annulled, of justice overturned, of law-courts made the play-ground for flagitious vices, of criminals encouraged and bewept, of heated imaginations, sharpened senses, animalism, indulgence in all lusts and passions, of imperious luxury, with her brood of violent insatiable desires, deceits, intrigues, oppressions, losses of faith and honesty and honour, swindlings, pilferings, bankruptcies, pecuniary straits, base traffickings in sexual bargains, adulteries, the marriage-tie made unendurable and snapped by force or cold collusion.

After such wise, by turning the innocent word 'prejudice' into a weapon of attack against everything which restrained vice, crime, illicit pleasure, violence, and social profligacy—against whatever, in short, rationally deserves to be called prejudice—the human race plunged willingly and universally into a pitiable and apparently immedicable state of pure unvarnished prejudice. And this has been effected by the flattering enthusiasm for curing us of prejudices! Indeed it is fine to notice how that poor word 'prejudice' is bandied about. The folk who suffer from the real disease, and who complain most loudly of its miserable consequences, declare themselves atheists, declaim against what

they call prejudice in their sophisticated jargon, while they bless the legitimate, veracious prejudice, which is the fount and source of all the evils over which they weep, lament, and shriek.

Compared with these weighty topics, what follows may appear a trifle hardly worthy of consideration. I allude to the revolution in literary taste attempted by the Jesuit Father, now the Abbé Xavier Bettinelli, together with some other restless spirits. Twisting that unfortunate word 'prejudice' to suit their purpose, they scouted sound studies, established models, correction of style, and the authority of acknowledged masters. All such things were reckoned prejudices by these iconoclasts, who would fain have burned down the temple of Diana in their insolent ambition to be stared at as new stars, original thinkers, independent writers.

Bettinelli, a man not destitute of parts, fecundity, and eloquence, began by preaching to our youth that it was a prejudice to stand at gaze and slumber over our old authors. What good could the study of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio do us now? How could the imitation of their successors in Italian poetry and prose be profitable to us in the middle of the eighteenth century? Students of the good old type he derided as arid word-mongers, who had lost their wits by poring over languid, prosy, frigid models of an antiquated style. To Dante, without understanding him, he condescendingly allowed a few

fine verses, a few felicitous images, amid that vast ocean of scurrilities and repulsive barbarisms—the Divine Comedy!

This would-be innovator was possibly justified in his contempt for the fashionable keepsake books of poetry which we call *Raccolte*.[1] I will not defend them, though much might plausibly be urged in favour of a custom which does no harm, which reflects lustre on noble families, and which affords the rich an opportunity of succouring needy men of letters. However that may be, Bettinelli wrote and published a satire entitled *Le Raccolte*, which was intended to crush them, and to serve as a specimen of his originality in works of fancy. The Granelleschi had always watched with humorous attention Signor Bettinelli's pranks and gambols, and they now resolved on doing something to sober him down a bit. Two of the best scholars in the Academy, Signor Marco Forcellini and the Abbé Dottore Natale dalle Laste, undertook the task of examining his poem. They had little difficulty in proving that its author, while seeking to pass for a giant of original genius, was nothing better than the servile plagiarist of Ariosto and Boileau. This conclusion they put forth in an essay, entitled "A criticism of the little poem *Le Raccolte*." It seemed to us, however, that the essay was somewhat serious in style for an Academy which aimed at playfulness. Accordingly, I was

[1] See above, vol. i. p. 367.

commissioned to enliven it with an epistle in a lighter strain. This epistle I wrote, as my poor brains dictated, but with perhaps too much of boldness and asperity. The essay and the epistle were published together in one volume. Meanwhile, my brother Gasparo, indignant that Dante, whose resplendent genius has shed the light of glory upon Italy through so many centuries, should become the butt of a mere seeker after notoriety, wrote his *Defence of Dante*, which was also printed. Intelligent judges allow that this book is full of truth, and that its arguments are convincingly victorious over Bettinelli's arrogant and puerile scoffings. I am therefore at liberty to say that my brother's *Difesa di Dante* is a really fine work.

What good came of these polemics? Very little, I am bound to say. Novelties, whether they are really new or only seem to be so, have the power of seducing and exciting innumerable intellects among the mass of those who cannot grasp the truth, but who respond at once to clamorous fanaticism. In number such folk infinitely exceed the small minority who, remaining loyal to truth, seek her even at the bottom of the well into which imposture plunges her.

I have always shared the hardihood of politicians, who dare to raise their minds aloft, and look down from a height upon the lowly vale in which humanity resides. But with this difference: They regard the

valley as inhabited by a swarm of insects, whom it is their art to sway, oppress, and drive about in their own interest; nor do they stoop to fraternise with these same insects until death reduces all to one brotherhood. I regard the valley as peopled by creatures of my kith and kindred, making observations on them, laughing at their grotesque gestures, motions, and contortions; then I descend to their level, associate once more with my neighbour, assure him that we are all alike ridiculous, and try to make him laugh at himself no less than at me by the proofs I give him of my proposition.

I do not need to study astronomy in order to discover whether there are planets which control the course of human thought. The natural seeds of levity, inconsistency, ennui, thirst for new sensations, with which our brains are crowded, when they begin to germinate, suffice to change the thoughts of mortals, and occasion fits of fashion, which not all the cables of all the dockyards in the world can check before their course is run. When one fashion is exhausted, the seeds I have described above set others in motion; and without interrogating the stars—unless indeed it be the vogue to do so—any patient student of past history may easily arrive at the conclusion that an unbroken chain of such manias and fits of fashion, due to the same natural causes, have always swayed, and will always sway, the stupidity of man; and man in his stupidity is

always blind, always possessed of the assurance that his glance is eagle-eyed.

What our forefathers saw, we see, and our posterity is doomed to see—a constant ebb and flow of opinions, determined in some part by a few bold thinkers, who publish to the world discoveries now useful and now useless, now frivolous and now pernicious. Let not, however, these thinkers flatter themselves that when they have contrived to set a fashion going, their most clamorous supporters will take and stick to it more firmly than they do to the vogue created by the opening of some new magnificent caffè or by Blondi's magazine of novelties, that very phœnix of fashion-makers in things our butterflies of human frailty think the most important.

As regards literature, in the middle of this century, and under the rising sun of Signor Bettinelli, we were condemned to behold a decided change for the worse. All that had been done to restore purity and simplicity, after the decadence of seventeenth-century taste, was swept away by a new and monstrous fit of fashion. The Granelleschi cried out in vain for sound principles and cultivated taste; contended in vain that, Italy being a nation which could boast a mother-language, with its literary usage, its vulgar usage, and its several dialects, reason bade us hold fast by the Della Cruscan vocabulary, and seek to enrich that, instead of disputing its authority. We cried to the winds, and were obliged to look on while

the world was deluged with fanatical, obscure, bombastic lucubrations — laboured sophisms, rounded periods with nothing in them, the flimsy dreams of sick folk, sentiments inverted and distorted—and the whole of this farrago indited in a language mixed of all the vernacular dialects, with interlarded bits of the Greek tongue, but above all with so many French words and phrases that our own Italian dictionaries and grammars seemed to have become superfluous.

XXXVIII.

Sequel of my literary quarrels.—Goldoni and Chiari.—My resolve to amuse my fellow-citizens with fantastic dramatic pieces on the stage.

This new fashion of unlicensed freedom and of sheer enthusiasm made rapid strides, because it was convenient and comfortable. Intellects, misled and muddled, lost the sense of what is good and bad in writing. They applauded the worst and the best without distinction. Little by little, commonplace and transparent stupidities on the one hand—stupidities sonorous and oracular upon the other, were adopted in the practice of literature. Pure, cultivated, judicious, and natural style took on the aspect of debilitated languor and despicable affectation.

The contagion spread so rapidly and so widely,

that even men like Doctor Carlo Goldoni and the Abbé Pietro Chiari were universally hailed and eulogized as first-rate Italian authors. Their original and incomparable achievements were lauded to the skies. To them we owed a fit of fashion, which lasted some few lustres, and which helped to overthrow the principles of sound and chaste expression.

These rivals, both of them dramatic poets, and each the critic of the other, were strong enough to heat the brains of our Venetian folk to boiling-point, so that the public formed two stormy parties, which came well-nigh to fisticuffs over the sublimities of their respective idols.

A whirlwind of comedies, tragi-comedies, and tragedies, composts of imperfections, occupied the public stage; the one genius of inculture vying with the other in the quantity he could produce. A diarrhœa of dramatic works, romances, critical epistles, poems, cantatas, and apologies by both the Vandals poured from the press and deluged Venice. All the youth were stunned, distracted, and diverted from good sense by din and tumult. Only the Granelleschi kept themselves untainted by this Goldonio-Chiaristic epidemic.

We did not shun the theatres. We were not so unjust as to refuse his share of merit as a playwright to Goldoni. We did not confound him with Chiari, to whom we conceded nothing, or but little. Yet we were unable to glance with other eyes than

those of pitying derision upon the tables of fine ladies, the writing-desks of gentlemen, the stalls of booksellers and artisans, the hands and arms of passers in the street, the rooms of public and private schools, colleges, even convents—all of which were loaded with Goldoni's comedies, Chiari's comedies and romances, the thousand trivialities and absurdities of both quill-drivers—while everything the scribblers sent to press was valued as a mirror of reform in literature, a model of right thinking and good writing.

I hope that no one will be scandalised if I report a saying which I heard with my own ears. There was a certain Abbé Salerni, Venetian-born, a preacher of the gospel. He was in the habit of thundering forth Lenten-sermons from the pulpits, and had a multitude of eager listeners. This man announced one day, with the air of frank and sturdy self-conceit, that he had arrived at composing his oratorical masterpieces upon sacred themes by the unremitting study of Goldoni's comedies.

I ought to render a candid account here of the impression made upon me by those two deluges of ink, Goldoni and Chiari. To begin with Goldoni. I recognised in him an abundance of comic motives, truth, and naturalness. Yet I detected a poverty and meanness of intrigue; nature copied from the fact, not imitated; virtues and vices ill-adjusted, vice too frequently triumphant; plebeian phrases of low double meaning, particularly in his Venetian plays;

surcharged characters; scraps and tags of erudition, stolen Heaven knows where, and clumsily brought in to impose upon the crowd of ignoramusses. Finally, as a writer of Italian—except in the Venetian dialect, of which he showed himself a master—he seemed to me not unworthy to be placed among the dullest, basest, and least correct authors who have used our idiom.

In spite of all the praises showered upon Goldoni, paid for or gratis, by journalists, preface-writers, romancers, apologists, Voltaires, I do not think that, with the single exception of his *Bourru Bienfaisant*, which he wrote at Paris, which suited the French theatre, but which had no success in its Italian translation here, he ever produced a perfect dramatic piece. At the same time I must add that he never produced one without some excellent comic trait. In my eyes he had always the appearance of a man who was born with the innate sense of how sterling comedies should be composed, but who, by defect of education, by want of discernment, by the necessity of satisfying the public and supplying new wares to the poor Italian comedians through whom he gained his livelihood, and by the hurry in which he produced so many pieces every year to keep himself afloat, was never able to fabricate a single play which does not swarm with faults.

In the course of our playful and airy polemics—polemics which had more the form of witty squibs

than formal criticisms—polemics which we Granelleschi never deigned to aim directly, in due form of siege, against the outpoured torrents of Goldoni and Chiari, but which we meant to act as sinapisms on the minds of sluggish youths, besotted by that trash and froth of ignorance—I once defied the whole world to point out a single play of Goldoni's which could be styled perfect. I confined myself to one, because I did not care to be drowned in an ocean; and I felt confident that I could fulfil my part of the challenge by making even boys and children see how the public had been taken in. No one stooped to take my glove up, and to name the perfect comedy. The goad and lash of pleasantry, with which I exposed Goldoni's stupidities, only elicited the following two verses, which he wrote and printed, and which exactly illustrate the stupidity I accused him of:—

> "Pur troppo so che buon scrittor non sono,
> E che a' fonti miglior non ho bevuto."
>
> ("Too well I know that I am no good writer,
> And that I have not drunk at the best fountains.")

Proceeding next to Abbé Chiari. In him I found a brain inflamed, disordered, bold to rashness, and pedantic; plots dark as astrological predictions; leaps and jumps demanding seven-league boots; scenes isolated, disconnected from the action, foisted in for the display of philosophical sententious verbiage; some good theatrical surprises, some descriptions

felicitous in their blunt *naiveté;* pernicious ethics; and, as for the writer, I found him one of the most turgid, most inflated, nay, the most turgid, the most inflated, of this century. I once saw a sonnet of his, printed and posted on the shops in Venice; it was composed to celebrate the recovery from illness of a patrician, and began with this verse :—

> "Sull' incude fatal del nostro pianto."
> ("Upon the fatal anvil of our tears.")

Nothing more need be said. With such monstrosities in metre, he had the courage to proclaim himself a modern Pindar. Goldoni he looked down upon like some gull of the lagoons. Yet, such as he was, Chiari succeeded in mystifying a thousand empty brains, who admired him without understanding a line he wrote.

It is not to be wondered at if a Goldoni and a Chiari, with a few disciples and adherents, were able to create a temporary *furore,* when we consider that this *furore* flamed up in the precincts of the theatres. Here all the population was divided into hostile camps, and each party was so blind and bewitched as not to recognise the infinite superiority of Goldoni as a comic playwright over his rival.

What is the force of righteous indignation when a vogue of this sort has been launched on its career? That of Goldoni and Chiari was bound to run its natural course, and when it died away, the

other, which I have described in the foregoing chapter, the vogue of immoderate, unnatural, incorrect enthusiasts, so-styled sublime philosophers, came in, who discovered new worlds in literature, and who are fawning now upon the young men of our days, threatening new vocabularies, nay, new alphabets, treating antiquity as a short-sighted idiot, and involving humanity in an undistinguishable chaos of literary follies.

With regard to the mania created by Goldoni and Chiari, as may easily be imagined, I looked upon it as a fungus growth upon opinion, worthy at the best of laughter. I deemed that, at any rate, I had the right to be the master of my own thoughts; and a trifle in verse which I wrote for my amusement, without the intention of sending it to press, was the accidental cause of obliging me to maintain my views against these poets by a series of good-natured *jeux d'esprit*. My real friends know that I harboured no envy, no sentiment of rivalry against them and their swamps of volumes in octavo. Any one who has the justice to remember that I was a mere amateur in literature, giving away gratis whatever issued from my pen, will agree with my friends, and acknowledge that I was prompted by a disinterested zeal in the cause of pure and unaffected writing. May Heaven pardon those, and there are many of them, who have held me up for detestation as a malignant satirist, seeking to found my

own fame and fortune upon the ruin of others! The players and publishers would be able to disabuse them of this notion. But I do not choose to beg for testimonials to my generosity; and perhaps I have not told the whole truth about it in the chapter already written upon my own character.[1]

It was in the year 1757 then that I composed the little book in verse which I have mentioned, closely following the style of good old Tuscan masters, and giving it the title of *La Tartana degl' influssi per l'anno bisestile* 1757.[2] This little work contained a gay critique in abstract on the uses and abuses of the times. It was composed upon certain verses of that obscure Florentine poet Burchiello, which I selected as prophetic texts for my own disquisitions. It took the humour of our literary club, and I dedicated it to a patrician of Venice, Daniele Farsetti, to whom I also gave the autograph, without retaining any copy for my own use. This Cavaliere, a man of excellent culture, and a Mecænas of the Granelleschi, wishing to give me an agreeable surprise, and thinking perhaps that he would meet with difficulty in getting the poem printed at Venice, sent it to Paris to be put in type, and distributed the few copies which were struck off among his friends in Venice.

This trifling volume might have gone the round

[1] See above, chap. xxxi.

[2] The first or Paris edition bears, however, the date 1756.

of many hands, affording innocent amusement by its broad and humorous survey over characters and customs, if a few drops of somewhat pungent ink, employed in lashing the bad writers of those days, had not played the part of venomous and sacrilegious asps. Goldoni, besides being a regular deluge of dramatic works, had in him I know not what diuretic medicine for composing little things in verse, songs, rhyming diatribes, and other such-like poems of a very muddy order. This gift he now exercised, while putting together a collection of panegyrics on the patrician Veniero's retirement from the rectorship of Bergamo, to vent one of his commonplace *terza-rima* rigmaroles against my *Tartana degli influssi.* He abused the book as a stale piece of mustiness, an inept and insufferable scarecrow; treating its author as an angry man who deserved compassion, because (he chose to say) I had wooed fortune in vain. Many other polite expressions of the same stamp adorned these triplets.

Meanwhile, the famous Signor Lami, who at that time wrote the literary paper of Florence, thought my *Tartana* worthy of notice in his journal, and extracted some of its stanzas on the decadence and corruption of the language. Padre Calogerà, too, who was then editing the *Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia,* composed and published praises on it, which were certainly above its merits. I flatter myself that my readers will not think I record these facts out of

vanity. I was not personally acquainted with either Lami or Calogerà. It is not my habit to correspond with celebrated men of letters in order to manufacture testimonials out of their civil and flattering replies. I do not condescend to wheedle journalists and reviewers into imposing on the credulity of the public by calling bad things good and good things bad in my behoof. I have always been so far sensible as to check self-esteem, and to appreciate my literary toys at their due worthlessness. Writers who by tricks of this kind, extortions, canvassings, and subterfuges, seek to gratify their thirst for fame, and to found a reputation upon bought or begged for attestations, are the objects of my scorn and loathing. For Lami and Calogerà I cherished sentiments of gratitude. I seemed to find in them a spirit kindred to my own, and a conviction that I had uttered what was useful in the cause of culture.

As a matter of fact, although the *Tartana* was written in strict literary Tuscan, although its style was modelled upon that of antiquated Tuscan authors, especially of Luigi Pulci, and was therefore "caviare to the general," the book obtained a rapid and wide success. The partisans of Goldoni and Chiari took it for a gross malignant satire.

Possibly the rarity of copies, and the fact that it came from Paris, helped to float the little poem. Anyhow, it created such a sensation, raised so much controversy, and brought so many young students

into relations with myself and membership among the Granelleschi, that I almost dared to hope for a new turn of the tide in literature.

It was this hope which made me follow up the missile I had cast into the wasp's nest of bad authorship by a pleasant retort against Goldoni's strictures on my *Tartana*. Goldoni was a good fellow at bottom, but splenetic, and a miserable writer. Having begun life as a pleader at the bar of Venice, he never succeeded in throwing off a certain air of professional coarseness and a tincture of forensic rhetoric. I seized upon this point of weakness, and indited an epistle, which he was supposed to have written me, larded with all the jargon of the law-courts. The object of the letter was to introduce his terzets to my notice. I gave it the following title: *Scrittura contestativa al taglio della Tartana degl' Influssi stampata a Parigi l'anno* 1757. After this I set myself to examine his *terza-rima* poem, and had no difficulty in exposing a long list of stupidities, improprieties, puerilities, and injustices. Without altering the low and trivial sentiments expressed in it, I rewrote the whole in a style of greater elegance and elevation, so as to prove that even the most plebeian thoughts may acquire harmony and decent grace by choiceness of diction. Finally, I dissuaded him from sending his unhappy pamphlet to the press, and concluded by addressing some octave stanzas to the public, in which I begged them to set him free in future

from his self-imposed obligation of composing in verse.

I did not stop here. My *Tartana* contained some satirical sallies against the comedies in vogue upon our stage; and Goldoni had appropriated these to himself. In his invective he inserted a couple of forensic lines against me, which conveyed a kind of challenge. Here they are:—

> "Chi non prova l'assunto e l'argomento,
> Fa come il cane che abbaja alla luna."
>
> ("He who proves not both theme and argument,
> Acts like the dog who barks against the moon.")

This excited me to write another little book, in which I proved the proposition and the argument, and at the same time afforded my readers food for mirth.

I feigned that the Granelleschi were assembled one day during Carnival, to dine at the tavern of the Pellegrino, which looks out upon the Piazza di San Marco. My comrades gathered round the windows to observe the passing masqueraders, when a monstrous creature, wearing a mask of four strongly-marked and different faces, entered the inn. They entreated it to come up into our room, in order that they might examine it at leisure. This mask of the the four faces and four mouths represented the Comic Theatre of Goldoni, personified by me in the way I shall explain. As soon as it caught sight of me, the author of *Tartana*, it turned to fly off in a rage, but

was forced to stay and sustain an argument with me upon the theme of its dramatic productions.

In the dialogue which ensued, I maintained and proved that Goldoni had striven to gain popularity rather by changing the aspect of his wares than by any real merit which they possessed. After scribbling plots in outline for the old-fashioned comedy of improvisation, which he afterwards attacked and repudiated, he had begun by putting into written dialogue certain motives neglected by that kind of drama. Then seeing that this first manner began to pall, he dropped his so-called Reform of the Stage, and assailed the public with his *Pamelas* and other romances. When this novelty in its turn ceased to draw, he bethought himself of those Venetian farces, which were indeed the best and longest-lived of his dramatic hashes. In time they suffered the fate of their predecessors, because such vulgar scenes from life could not fail to be monotonous. Accordingly, he tried another novelty, tickling the ears of his audience with rhymed Martellian verses and semi-tragic pieces, stuffed out with absurdities, improprieties, and the licentiousness of Oriental manners. These *Spose Persiane*, brutal *Ircane*, dirty *Eunuchi*, and unspeakable *Curcume*, by the mere fact of their bad morality, monstrosity, and improbability, raised Goldoni's fame among a crowd of fools and fanatics, who learned his long-winded Martellian lines by heart, and went about the alleys of the town reciting

them aloud, to the annoyance of people who knew what good poetry really is.

I maintained and proved that he had rashly essayed tragedy of the sublime style, but had prudently fallen back on such plebeian representations as the *Pettegolezzi delle Donne*, the *Femmine gelose della Signora Lucrezia*, the *Putta Onorata*, the *Bona Muger*, the *Rusteghi*, the *Todero Brontolone*. The arguments of comedies like these were well adapted to his talent. He displayed in them a really extraordinary ability for interweaving dialogues in the Venetian dialect, taken down by him with pencil and note-book in the houses of the common people, taverns, gaming hells, *traghetti*, coffee-houses, places of ill-fame, and the most obscure alleys of our city. Audiences were delighted by the realism of these plays, a realism which had never before been so brilliantly illustrated, illuminated, and adorned, as it now was by the ability of actors who faithfully responded to the spirit of this new and popular type of farce.

I maintained and proved that he had frequently charged the noble persons of his plays with fraud, absurdity, and baseness, reserving serious and heroic virtues for personages of the lower class, in order to curry favour with the multitude, who are always too disposed to envy and malign the great. I also showed that his *Putta Onorata* was not honest, and that he had incited to vice while praising virtue with the dulness of a tiresome sermon. With regard to this

point, the four-mouthed Comic Theatre kept protesting that it wished to drive the time-honoured masks of improvised comedy off the stage, accusing them of imposture, immodesty, and bad example for the public. I, on the other hand, clearly proved that Goldoni's plays were a hundred times more lascivious, more indecent, and more injurious to morals. My arguments were rendered irrefutable by a whole bundle of obscene expressions, dirty double-entendres, suggestive and equivocal situations, and other nastinesses, which I had collected and textually copied from his works. The monstrous mask defended itself but poorly, and at last fell to abusing me personally with all its four mouths at once. This did not serve it; and when I had argued it down and exposed it to the contempt of the Granelleschi, it lifted up its clothes in front, and exhibited a fifth mouth, which it carried in the middle of its stomach. This fifth allegorical mouth raised up its voice and wept, declaring itself beaten and begging for mercy. I admit that my satire here was somewhat harsh and broad; but it had been provoked by an expression of Goldoni's, who twitted me with being *a man out of temper with fortune.*

As a preface to these two little works, I composed an epistle in blank verse, in which I dedicated them to a certain well-known poverty-stricken citizen of Venice, called Pietro Carati. The man used to go about the streets, wrapt in a ragged mantle, with a

rusty periwig, and black stockings, mended in a thousand places with green, grey, or white silk (the surest signs of beggary), modestly demanding from his acquaintances some trifle to support his dignity as cittadino.

In this epistle I repeated that I was not out of temper with fortune, that I sought no favours from that goddess by my writings, and that my only object was to carry on the war against bad authors, and to uphold the rules and purity of literature. These two little pamphlets became the property of the public before I had time and opportunity to print them. The stir they made while yet in manuscript occasioned a series of events which I will now relate.[1]

The noble gentleman, Giuseppe Farsetti, who was a member of our Academy, came to me one day, and told me that another patrician, Count Ludovico Widiman, and he would take it very kindly if I consented to withdraw my little works from publication. I was somewhat surprised, because I knew that the Cavaliere Farsetti was a lover of good literature. Count Widiman, on the other hand, had declared himself a partisan of Goldoni. Nevertheless, I

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[1] I have to say that what follows in this chapter has been very considerably abridged from Gozzi's text. Apology is owed to him by the translator for condensing his narrative and confining it to points of permanent interest, if indeed there is any interest at all in bygone literary squabbles, while retaining the first person.

readily assented to their request, and promised to bury my two pamphlets in oblivion. I added, at the same time, that I felt sure that Goldoni, when he was aware of this act of generosity on my part, would begin hostilities against me, trusting to his numerous and enthusiastic following.

I was not mistaken when I made this prophecy. It soon became evident that Goldoni intended to carry on the war against us lovers of pure writing in all the *Raccolte* which appeared from time to time in Venice. He also introduced affected and unpleasant types of character upon the stage under Florentine names, and otherwise jeered at us in the coarse little poems which he styled his *Tavole Rotonde*. Confiding in his popularity and the influence of those fine gentlemen whom he called his "beloved patrons," he hoped to revenge himself on me and to suppress my *Tartana*.

To break my promise given to the two Cavalieri, and to publish the satirical pieces I have described above, was out of the question. So I prepared myself for a guerilla warfare, something after Goldoni's own kind, but more witty and amusing. I judged it better to fight the quarrel out with short and cutting pieces, which should throw ridicule upon my adversary and amuse the public, than to begin a critical controversy in due form. Squibs and satires were now exchanged daily between Polisseno Fegejo (such was Goldoni's high-sounding title in the Arcadi of Rome)

and my humble self, the Solitario in our modest Academy of the Granelleschi.

To meet Goldoni's lumbering diatribes in verse, I brought out a little burlesque poem, which I called *Sudori d'Imeneo.* It was printed on the occasion of a wedding, and created a revolution among the wits which exceeded my most sanguine expectations. At this distance of time I find it impossible to render a precise account of the innumerable compositions which I produced in this controversy. They were read at the time with avidity, because of their novelty and audacity. I never cared to keep a register of my published or unpublished writings in prose and verse. If I were asked where these trifles could be found, I should reply: "Certainly not in my hands." Some of my friends, however—among them the Venetian gentleman, Raffaele Todeschini, and Sebastiano Muletti of Bergamo—thought it worth while to form complete collections of such pieces from my pen.

It must not be imagined that Abbé Chiari escaped without blows in this battle of the books. It so happened that an unknown writer subjected one of his prologues to a scathing satire in an essay called *Five Doubts.* The piece was mistakenly attributed to me; and Chiari answered it by six cowardly, filthy, satirical sonnets, which he circulated in manuscript, against myself and the Granelleschi. Upon this there arose a whole jungle of pens in our defence. The five doubts were multiplied by four, by six; and

the Abbé was argued and twitted out of his wits. In these straits, he condescended to extend the kiss of peace to his old foe Goldoni, and Goldoni abased himself to the point of accepting the salute. Drowning their former rivalries and differences, they now entered into an offensive and defensive alliance against the Academy and me.

Meanwhile our party grew steadily in numbers. The head-quarters of the Granelleschi as a belligerent body were at this time established in the shop of the bookseller Paolo Colombani. Every month we issued here in parts a series of critical and satirical papers, which drew crowds of purchasers round Colombani's counter. The papers appeared under the title of *Atti Granelleschi*, and were prefaced with an introduction in octave stanzas from my pen. The noise they created all about the town was quite remarkable, and young men eagerly enrolled themselves under our standard of the Owl. Chiari and Goldoni, on their side, were not idle; but the alliance they had struck took off considerably from their vogue. This depended in no small measure on their former rivalry. The dropping fire which had been exchanged between their partisans kept their names and fames before the public. Now that they were fighting under one flag against us, the interest in their personalities declined.

Without pursuing the details of this literary war, which raged between the years 1757 and 1761, I

will only touch upon those circumstances which led me to try my fortune on the stage as a dramatic writer. Both Goldoni and Chiari professed themselves the champions of theatrical reform; and part of their programme was to cut the throat of the innocent *Commedia dell' Arte*, which had been so well supported in Venice by four principal and deservedly popular masks: Sacchi, Fiorilli, Zannoni, and Derbes. It seemed to me that I could not castigate the arrogance of these self-styled Menanders better than by taking our old friends Truffaldino, Tartaglia, Brighella, Pantalone, and Smeraldina under my protection. Accordingly, I opened fire with a dithyrambic poem, praising the extempore comedians in question, and comparing their gay farces favourably with the dull and heavy pieces of the reformers.[1] Chiari and Goldoni replied to my attacks and those of my associates by challenging us to produce a comedy. Goldoni, in particular, called me a verbose word-monger, and kept asserting that the enormous crowds which flocked together to enjoy his plays constituted a convincing proof of their essential merit. It is one thing, he said, to write subtle verbal criticisms, another thing to compose dramas which shall fill the public theatres with enthusiastic audiences. Spurred by this continual appeal to popularity and vogue, I uttered the deliberate opinion that crowded theatres

[1] This poem is printed in vol. viii. of Colombani's edition of Carlo Gozzi's Works.

proved nothing with regard to the goodness or the badness of the plays which people came to see ; and I further staked my reputation on drawing more folk together than he could do with all his scenic tricks, by simply putting the old wives' fairy-story of the *Love of the Three Oranges* upon the boards.

Shouts of incredulous and mocking laughter, not unnaturally, greeted this Quixotic challenge. They stung my sense of honour, and made me gird up my loins for the perilous adventure. When I had composed the scheme of my strange drama, and had read it to the Granelleschi, I could see, by the laughter it excited, that there was stuff and bottom in the business. Yet my friends dissuaded me from producing such a piece of child's-play before the public ; it would certainly be hissed, they said, and compromise the dignity of our Academy.

I replied that the whole public had to be attacked in front upon the theatre, in order to create a sensation, and to divert attention from our adversaries. I meant to give, and not to sell this play, which I hoped would vindicate the honour and revenge the insults of our Academy. Finally, I humbly submitted that men of culture and learning were not always profoundly acquainted with human nature and the foibles of their neighbours.

Well, I made a present of *L'Amore delle Tre Melarancie* to Sacchi's company of comic players, and the extravaganza was produced in the theatre of

San Samuele at Venice during the Carnival of 1761. Its novelty and unexpectedness,—the surprise created by a fairy-tale adapted to the drama, seasoned with trenchant parodies of both Chiari's and Goldoni's plays, and not withal devoid of moral allegory—created such a sudden and noisy revolution of taste that these poets saw in it the sentence of their doom.

Who could have imagined that this twinkling spark of a child's fable on the stage should have outshone the admired and universally applauded illumination of two famous talents, condemning them to obscurity, while my own dramatised fairy-tales throve and enthralled the public for a period of many years? So wags the world!

XXXIX.

My plan of campaign for assailing Goldoni and Chiari through the militia of actors I had chosen.—The four Fiabe: Il Corvo, Il Re Cervo, La Turandotte, I Pitocchi Fortunati.

In the long course of my observations upon human nature and the different sorts of men, I had not as yet enjoyed an opportunity of studying the race of actors. I was curious to do so, and the time had come.

With the view of attacking my two poet adver-

saries in the theatre, I made choice of the comic troupe of Sacchi, the famous Truffaldino.[1] It was composed for the most part of close relatives, and bore the reputation of being better behaved and more honest than any others. Professionally, they sustained our old national comedy of improvisation with the greatest spirit. This type of drama, as I have said above, Goldoni and Chiari, under the mask of zeal for culture, but really with an eager eye to gain, had set themselves to ruin and abolish.

Antonio Sacchi, Agostino Fiorilli, Atanagio Zannoni, and Cesare Derbes, all of them excellent players in their several lines, represented the four masks, Truffaldino, Tartaglia, Brighella, and Pantalone. Each of these men could boast of perfect practice in their art, readiness of wit, grace, fertility of ideas, variety of sallies, bye-play, drollery, naturalness, and some philosophy. The soubrette of the company, Andriana Sacchi-Zannoni, possessed the same qualities. Its other members, at the time when I took up their cause, were old men and women, persons of good parts but unattractive physique, lifeless sticks, and inexperienced children. Some time earlier, the troupe had been extremely well-to-do and popular in Italy.

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[1] I may remind my readers that Truffaldino was the specific form invented for the mask of Arlecchino by Sacchi. See above, vol. i. p. 53. Truffaldino was originally a character in Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, where he played the part of a consummate rogue, traitor, and coward, and was killed by the paladin Rinaldo (Bk. i. Cant. 26).

But the two playwrights in question, after having lived in partnership with them, had turned round and taken the bread out of their mouths. Sacchi, in these circumstances, withdrew his company to the Court of Portugal, where they prospered, until a far more formidable enemy than a brace of poets assailed them. The terrible earthquake of Lisbon put a stop to all amusements in that capital; and our poor players, having lost their occupation, returned to Venice after an absence of some four years, and encamped in the theatre of San Samuele.

Upon their arrival, they met with a temporary success. Many amateurs of the old drama, who were bored to death with Martellian verses and such plays as the *Filosofi Inglesi*, *Pamelas*, *Pastorelle Fedeli*, *Plautuses*, *Molières*, *Terences*, and *Torquato Tassos*, then in vogue, hailed them with enthusiasm. During the first year the four masks and the soubrette, with some other actors of merit in the extempore style, took the wind out of Goldoni's and Chiari's sails. Little by little, however, the novelties poured forth by these two fertile writers, who kept on treating the clever fellows as contemptible mountebanks and insipid buffoons, prevailed, and reduced them to almost total neglect.

It seemed to me that I should be able to indulge my humour for laughter if I made myself the colonel of this regiment. I also hoped to score a victory for the insulted Granelleschi by drawing crowds to

Sacchi's theatre with my dramatic allegories based on nursery-tales. The fable of *L'Amore delle Tre Melarancie* made a good beginning. My adversaries were driven mad by the revolt it caused among play-goers, by its parodies and hidden meanings, which the newspapers industriously explained, describing many things which I had never put there. They attempted to hoot it down by clumsy abuse, affecting at the same time disgust and contempt for its literary triviality. Forgetting that it had been appreciated and enjoyed by people of good birth and culture, they called it a mere buffoonery to catch the vulgar. Its popularity they attributed to the co-operation of the four talented masks, whom they had sought to extirpate, and to the effect of the transformation scenes which it contained, ignoring the real spirit and intention of this comic sketch in a new style.

Laughing at their empty malice, I publicly maintained that art in the construction of a piece, well-managed conduct of its action, propriety of rhetoric and harmony of diction, were sufficient to invest a puerile fantastic motive, if taken seriously, with the illusion of reality, and to arrest the attention of the whole human race—excepting perhaps some thirty confirmed enemies, who would be sure, when my contention had been proved before their eyes and ears, to accuse a hundred thousand men of ignorance, and to renounce their sex rather than admit the truth.

This proposition was met with new gibes; and I found myself committed to make good my bold assertion. The fable of *Il Corvo*, extracted from a Neapolitan story-book, *Cunto delle cunte, trattenemiento pe le picciérelle*, and treated by me in the tone of lofty tragedy, wrought the miracle. I must add that I assigned some humorous passages to the four masks, whom I wished to keep upon the stage for the benefit of hypochondriacs, and in contempt of misunderstood and falsely applied rules from Aristotle.

The success of *Il Corvo* was complete. The public wept and laughed at my bidding. Multitudes flocked to hear this old wives' tale, as though it had been solemn history. The play had a long run; and the two poets were seriously damaged in their interests, while the newspapers applauded and extolled the allegory as a splendid example of fraternal affection.

I wished to strike while the iron was hot. Accordingly, my third fable, the *Rè Cervo*, appeared with similar results of popularity and sympathetic criticism. A thousand beauties were discovered, which I, who wrote it, had not seen. Folk regarded its allegory as a mirror for those monarchs who allow themselves to be blinded by their confidence in Ministers, and are in consequence transformed into the semblance of monsters. Meanwhile, my opponents persisted in ascribing the great success of these three pieces to stage decorations and the marvellous effect

of magic metamorphoses, neglecting the writer's art and science, the charm of his verse, and his adroit employment of rhetoric, morality, and allegory. This impelled me to produce two more fables, *Turandotte* and *I Pitocchi Fortunati*, in which magic marvels were conspicuous by their absence, while the literary art and science remained the same. A like success clinched my argument, without, however, disarming my antagonists.

I had formed the habit of conversing with my family of players in our hours of leisure; and very racy did I find the recreation of their society. In a short space of time I learned to understand and see into the characters and talents of my soldiers, with insight so perfect that all the parts I wrote for them and fitted, so to speak, upon their mental frames, were represented on the stage as though they issued naturally from their hearts and tempers. This added hugely to the attraction of the spectacle. The gift of writing for particular actors, which does not seem to be possessed or put in use by every dramatist, is almost indispensable while dealing with the comic troupes of Italy. The moderate payments which are customary in our theatres prevent these people from engaging so large a number of actors and actresses as to be able to select the proper representatives of all the varied characters in nature. To the accident of my possessing this gift, and the ability with which I exercised it, must be ascribed a large part of my

success. Goldoni alone devoted himself with patience to the study of the players who put his premeditated pieces on the boards;[1] but I defy Goldoni and all the writers for our stage to compose, as I did, parts differing in character, containing jokes, witticisms, drolleries, moral satire, and discourses in soliloquy or dialogue, adapted to the native genius of my Truffaldini, Tartaglia, Brighella, Pantaloni, and Servette, without lapsing into languor and frigidity, and with the same result of reiterated applause.

Other playwrights, who attempted to put written words into the mouth of extempore actors, only made them unnatural; and obtained, as the reward of their endeavours, the abuse and hisses of the public at the third representation of their insipid pieces. It is possibly on this account that they revenged themselves by assuming comic airs of grave and serious criticism, treating our miracles of native fun and humour as contemptible buffoons, all Italy as drunken and besotted, myself as the bolsterer up of theatrical ineptitudes, and my prolusions in a new dramatic style as crumbling relics of the old *Commedia dell' Arte.* So far as the last accusation goes, everybody will allow that the Masks which I supported as a *tour de force* of art and for the recreation

[1] This passage indicates Gozzi's justice, his habit of conceding the *suum cuique*, however grudgingly. Goldoni, as we learn from his Memoirs, piqued himself upon the study he made of actors like Darbes, Golinetti, and Collalto.

of the public who rejoiced in them, play the least part in my scenic compositions; my works, in fact, depend for their existence and survival on the sound morality and manly passion, which formed their real substratum, and which found expression on the lips of serious actors.[1]

For the rest, the players whom I had taken under my wing looked up to me as their tutelary genius. Whenever I appeared, they broke into exclamations of delight, and let the whole world know that I was the propitious planet of their resurrection. They professed themselves indebted to me for benefits which could not be repaid, except by an eternal gratitude.

XL.

The actors and actresses of Italy in general, considered with regard to their profession, their characters, and their manners; written from the point of view of a philosophical observer.

Among all sorts and conditions of human beings who offer themselves to a philosophical observer, none are so difficult to know in their real nature as actors and actresses.

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[1] A singular piece of self-criticism. Gozzi appeals to posterity on points which seem to us the least noteworthy in his work. Nothing is needed beyond the above sentences to dispel the illusion of his having been a free romantic genius.

Educated in deception from the cradle, they learn the art of masking falsehood with an air of candour so completely, that it requires great gifts of penetration to arrive at their true heart and character. Journeyings from place to place, affairs of business, accidents of all sorts, experience of common life, examples furnished by their commerce with the world, the constant exercise of wit and intellect in rivalry, wake their brains up, and subtilise their comedians' nature.

In another chapter I intend to paint a special picture of Sacchi's company, with whom I fraternised, and whom I helped for about a quarter of a century. At present I shall confine my remarks to Italian players in general, who are, I think, in no essential points of moral quality different from those of other nations.

It may be laid down as an axiom, to be accepted with closed eyes, that the chief idol of all actors is their venal interest. Expressions of politeness, acknowledgments of obligation, terms of praise, humanity, sympathy, courteous welcome, and so forth, have no value among actors, except as parts of a fixed system of deception which they consider necessary in the worship of this idol. If that idol of pecuniary interest is attacked (with justice it may be and the best reasons), you will not find in them a shadow of these fine sentiments. The merest scent of coming profit makes them disregard and blindly

sacrifice the persons who have done them good; the reputation of the whole world is as nothing to them then; they take no thought of the damage they may have to suffer in the future, blinded by greediness, lulled into security for the time being, and hoping to avoid impending disasters by address and ingenuity. The present moment is all that actors think of.

Hot and choleric temperaments reveal their true selves more readily among this class of people. The cool-headed are more difficult to fathom. Their system of cozenage is not only applied to persons outside the profession, from whom they expect material gains; it is always at work to take in and delude the members of the guild. Of course they find it less easy to checkmate the initiated in their own devices. But if they have attained to the position of being necessary to their comrades in the trade, there is no sort of impropriety, pretence, injustice, swindling, tyranny, which they do not deem it lawful to employ.

These arts, which the progress of our century has extended to many kinds of persons who are not of the profession, have a certain marked character among the tribe of actors. Other people, when detected, show some sense of shame and self-abasement. The unmasked comedian, after all his turns and twists have been employed in vain, is so unprejudiced and candid that he laughs good-humouredly in the face of his detective, and seems to exclaim

with indescribable effrontery: "You are a great fool if you flatter yourself that you have made a notable discovery."

Such is my experience. But of course it is possible that among the innumerable actors, male and female, whom I have known, conversed with, and studied, some phœnix of the one or the other sex may have escaped my observation.

In what concerns the practice of their art, all that these people know is how to read and write; one better, and one worse. Indeed, I have been acquainted with both actors and actresses who have not even had that minimum of education, and yet they carried on their business without flinching. They got their lines read out to them by some friend or some associate, whenever a new part had to be impressed in outline on their memory. Keeping their ears open to the prompter, they entered boldly on the stage, and played a hero or a heroine without a touch of truth. The presentation of such characters by actors of the sort I have described abounds in blunders, stops and stays, and harkings back upon the leading motive, which would put to shame the player in his common walk of life.

Barefaced boldness is the prime quality, the chief stock-in-trade, the ground-element of education in these artists. Assiduous use of this one talent makes not a few of them both passable and even able actors.

These are the reasons why a civil war is always raging in our companies about the first parts in new pieces. The conflict does not start from an honest desire to acquire or to manifest theatrical ability. The players are actuated wholly by ambition, by the hope of attracting favourable notice through the merit of their rôle, by the wish to keep themselves continually before the public, performing ill or well as their blind rashness prompts them.

Notwithstanding all these disadvantages, Italy would be able to make a good show in comparison with other nations if our theatres were better supported and remunerated. There are not wanting persons of fine presence, of talent, sensibility, and animation. What we do want are the refinements of education, solid protection, and emoluments sufficient to encourage the actor in his profession.

I have observed that the best artists of both sexes are those who have some higher culture; but I have also observed that the support of themselves and their families, and the inevitable expenses of their wardrobe, render their professional salaries inadequate. They make up for these deficiencies by spunging upon credulous tradesmen and besotted lovers; and thus they bring discredit on the whole profession.

I have always laughed at those who depreciate the influences of the pulpit, and think they can instil sound morality into the people by the means

of scenic shows. When Rousseau maintained that the precept *Do what I tell you, and not what I do*, is worthless without a good example from the man who gives it forth, he uttered one of the truest things that can be said. I leave people to meditate upon the inverted morality which is being now diffused in our most recent dramas, the dramas of so-called culture, from the lips of players in the place of preachers.

XLI.

A description of Sacchi's company in particular.—I continue the tone of a philosophical observer.

Having recorded the impression made upon me by Italian actors and actresses in general, I shall now attempt a description of Sacchi's company, which I had good opportunities of studying through some twenty-five years.

Though I read with sufficient ease into the hearts and characters of these my protegés, and could supply them with sentiments, dialogues, and soliloquies adapted to their inmost natures, I found it difficult to penetrate the motives of their moral conduct, which were far more closely fenced about from prying gaze than either their intellectual or their physical peculiarities.

There is no doubt that at least seven members of

this troupe were excellent artists in the national *Commedia alla sprovveduta*—a species of comedy which has always afforded innocent recreation to the public when performed with taste and spirit, but which is utterly insufferable when badly executed. This much I concede to the persecutors of the species—little talents, more ridiculous and useless with their ostentation of gravity than are even bad harlequins.

Sacchi's company enjoyed general respect in so far as their personal conduct was concerned. On this point they differed widely from the majority of our actors, who are for the most part very badly looked upon. This excellent reputation weighed strongly with me, when I sought their society, and entered into fraternal relations with them. The way they held together, the harmony which reigned among them, their domesticity, studious habits, severity in moral matters, their rules against visits being paid to women, the abhorrence the women themselves displayed for those who took presents from seducers, the regularity with which they divided their hours between household duties, religious exercises, and charitable attentions to the indigent among their members, gratified my taste. I may incidentally mention that if any of the salaried actresses or actors exceeded the prescribed bounds of decent conduct, they were quickly sent about their business; and such offenders were replaced by others, whose moral

character had been subjected to stricter inquiry than even their professional ability.

I am sufficiently unprejudiced and free from scruples; I have never evaded opportunities of studying human nature, which brought me into passing contact with all sorts of men; yet it is certain that I should not have entered into familiar relations and daily converse in my hours of recreation with these people, for upwards of the space of twenty years, if it had not been for their exceptional good character.

I not only composed for them a long series of theatrical pieces, novel in kind and congenial to their talents, but I also furnished them with a new arsenal of stock passages, essential to the *Commedia dell' Arte*, and which they call its *dote*, or endowment.[1] I could not say how many prologues and epilogues in verse I wrote, to be recited on the first and last evenings of the run of some play by the leading lady for the time being; nor how many songs to be inserted in their farces; nor how many thousand pages I filled with soliloquies, sallies of despair, menace, reproach, supplication, paternal reprimand, and such-like matters appropriate to all kinds of scenes in improvised comedy. The players

[1] Gozzi uses the word *squarci* for these stock passages. The expression is partly explained by what follows in the paragraph, and has been further illustrated by me above: vol. i. p. 62. See Bartoli's *Scenari*, pp. lxxv. *et seq.*

PANTALONE (1550)

Illustrating the Italian Commedia dell' Arte, or Impromptu Comedy

call such fragments of studied rhetoric *generici*, or commonplaces. They are vastly important to comedians who may not be specially gifted for improvisation ; and everything of the sort I found in their repertory was vitiated by the turgid mannerisms of the *seicento*.

I was godfather at the christening of their babies, author-in-chief, counsellor, master, and mediator to the whole company ; all this without assuming the pretentious airs of a pedant or a claimant on their gratitude ; but always at their own entreaty, while I preserved the tone of disinterested, humane, and playful condescension.

Some of the girls of this dramatic family—none of whom were ugly, and none without some aptitude for the profession—begged me to help them with support and teaching. I consented, provided them with parts adapted to their characters, taught them how they ought to act these parts, and put them in the way of winning laurels. At their entreaties I devoted some hours of my leisure to giving them more general instruction. I made them read and translate French books suited to their calling. I wrote them letters upon divers familiar themes, calculated to make them think and develop their sentiments under the necessity of composing some reply or other. I corrected their mistakes, which frequently consisted in the unexpected and uncalled-for use of capital letters, and laughed

heartily while doing so. This afforded me sprightly amusement and gave them a dash of education.

When they left Venice for the customary six months,[1] I ran no risk of not receiving letters from them, written in rivalry with one another—sometimes real love-letters—arriving by each post from Milan, Turin, Genoa, Parma, Mantua, Bologna, all the cities where they stopped to act. Nor were answers wanting upon my side ; playful, affectionate, threatening, derisive ; taking any tone which I judged capable of keeping these young creatures wide-awake. It seemed to me that such an active correspondence and exchange of sentiments was the most appropriate and profitable school for a comedian.

Let no man deceive himself by supposing that it is possible to converse with actresses without love-making. You must make it, or pretend to make it. This is the only way to guide them to their own advantage. Love moulds and kneads them in flesh, bones, and marrow. Love begins to be their guiding-star at the age of five or six. In this respect, I soon discovered that the austerity of Sacchi's company was a barren formula ; just as I had previously noticed that strictness in private families, beyond a certain point, had ceased to be accounted of utility or value.

[1] After the Carnival, until the following October. The theatrical year in Venice began on the first Sunday in October, and ended with the next Ash-Wednesday. It corresponded to the months in which masks were allowed.

Among actresses, the term friendship is something fabulous and visionary. They immediately substitute the word love, and do not attend to distinctions. Their idea of friendship only serves as the means of mutual deception between women, accompanied by deluges of endearing phrases and Judas kisses.

I ought, however, to declare that the actresses of Sacchi's company carried on their love-affairs with prudence and without indecency. The ideal of severity which prevailed there bore at least these fruits of goodness; and the ideal of honesty produced notably different results from those which other systems in the trade of love elicited elsewhere. How many actresses lay siege deliberately and in cold blood to their lovers, despoil them of their property, and do their very best to suck them dry! Catching at the locks of what they call their fortune and I call their infamy, these women do not stop to see whether the path before them be clean or filthy. They worship wickedness and abhor good living, if they hope to fill their purse or gratify their cupidity by the former. Though they strive to cloak their baseness with the veil of verbal decency, and do all in their power to preserve external decorum, they trample in their souls on shame and sing this verse:—

"Colla vergogna io già mi sono avvezza."

("With infamy I long have been at home.")

For the actresses of Sacchi's company, it is only justice

to assert that they were far removed from harbouring such sentiments of vile and degrading venality.

There are two phrases in the slang of the profession; one is *miccheggiare*, which means to cozen folk out of their money by wheedling; the other is *gonzo*, gull or cully, the foolish lover who believes himself an object of affection, and squanders all his fortune under the influence of this impression. I must declare that the women of Sacchi's company never put the arts which these words imply into practice. They made love by instinct, inclination, and hereditary tradition.

This does not mean that they were not eager to get lovers who could support them on the stage, or who would be likely to marry them, and withdraw them from a calling which they always professed, hypocritically I believe, to abhor.

In what concerned myself, I looked upon their love-intrigues as duels of wit and comic passages, which furnished me amusement. Closely related to each other, and ambitious for advancement in their art, they regarded me as a bright shining star, worshipped by the leading members of the troupe, and capable of securing them success upon the stage. Their mutual rivalry, which I made use of for their own advantage, the profit of the company, and the success of my dramatic works, turned their brains. They would have done anything to gain my heart. Possibly some matrimonial projects entered into their

calculations; but on this point I was always careful to disabuse them in the clearest terms. Meanwhile, their attentions, protests, fits of rage, jealousies, and tears on my account had all the scenic illusion of an overwhelming passion.

In the cities where they passed the spring and summer, the same comedy was re-enacted with a score of lovers. On their return to Venice, the correspondence which they carried on with these admirers, and which they vainly strove to hide from me, betrayed their inconstancy. By cross-examination and adroit suggestive questionings, I always brought them to make a clean breast of it, and their avowals furnished me with matter for exquisite amusement. They protested that the letters they received were written by young merchants or rich citizens, sometimes by gentlemen of the Lombard towns, who entertained the liveliest intentions of an honourable kind, and were only waiting for the death of an uncle or a father or a mother, all upon the point of dying of apoplexy or consumption or dropsy, to offer them their hands and fortunes. Finally, in order to reveal the sincerity of their hearts, when lying could no longer help them, they offered me these precious epistles. Probably they hoped to excite jealousy in my own breast. This opened a new chapter of diversion. I read the love-letters, and found that the vaunted admirers were either bombastic lady-killers or romancers or libertines, or

sometimes, to my astonishment, dull Lombard hypocrites upon the scent of goatish pleasure.

I enlightened them, so far as this was possible; advised them not to waste their time in such perilous fooleries, which distracted their attention from the serious concerns of their profession; bade them look out for young comedians of talent, with whom they might marry and propagate the breed of actors. They never failed to express that loathing for the trade which all actresses profess, remaining actresses, however, in the utterance of their repugnance. In order to open their eyes to the real state of the case, I then dictated answers to these lovers, affectionately urging them to declare themselves on the essential point. Cold replies came with the next post, and after a short exchange of letters the correspondence dropped. In this way, they were brought to see their error, remaining always ready to resume it on the next occasion.

Their sentiments for me, according to their own showing, were the most enduring and substantial; and my incredulous laughter wounded them. They bullied and maligned each other, complained, and accused their comrades at my judgment-seat. I pronounced sentence against them all; but the most persecuted were always the object of my heartiest protection. When I wrote parts adapted to their characters, they were lifted to the heavens. What obligations! What gratitude! What vows of love!

I cannot deny that in certain moments they were justified in thinking they had gained my affection. The next day they found me quite another man, indifferent and icy cold. *Amour propre* then made them fly into a rage, and grow the angrier the more they saw me laugh at their frenzies.

All things considered, it is very difficult to frequent the society of young actresses, who harbour in their breasts six books upon the art of love beside those of Ovid, to be their daily guide, philosopher, and friend, to make their fortunes in the theatre, and not to fall into some low matrimonial scrape, which would be called a solemn act of folly by the world. I use such terms as scrape, baseness, folly here, in order to adopt the language of people in general; although I am persuaded by personal observation, and by philosophical study of the current training given to girls, that it is easier to find a good wife on the stage than in private families. People in general are not philosophers enough to recognise and confess this truth; but the opinion of the general is always respectable.

My temperament, my abhorrence of ties, my partiality for study, the pity for human woes which I derived from knowledge of my neighbours, and the thirty-five years which I counted at the period in question, were my faithful counsellors. I have already written a chapter on my love-affairs, which sufficiently explains my sentiments.[1]

[1] Translated in chaps. xxxii., xxxiii., xxxiv.

In the midst of these feminine intrigues and rivalries, it is impossible to distribute protection with perfect impartiality among all claimants. The girl who is most persecuted by her comrades, most looked down upon, and reckoned stupidest in her profession, will always be chosen out by me for support and advancement, without regard for hostile gossip bred by envy.

In course of time I saw all these young women married, thanks to the fame they acquired through my efforts on their behalf. Some of them found husbands in the theatre, and some outside it. Without withdrawing my assistance from married actresses, I took care, from the moment of their nuptials, to cause no shadow of disturbance in their home. This I did by persistently refusing to visit them, which made them know me in my true principles apart from pleasantry. My conduct astounded them, and they affected notable displeasure at my withdrawal from their intimacy.

With regard to the chief men in this commonwealth of comędians, they were always most attentive lest I should receive annoyances. Above all things, they begged me not to take notice of any indiscretions prompted by levity, professional jealousy, touchiness on points of honour, pretensions to leading parts in my forthcoming plays, which might issue from the steaming brains of their women. I used to reply that, so long as the company maintained its

good reputation, and so long as such quarrels and idle chatterings were confined to the women, I should never deign to be annoyed or to withdraw my aid and friendship from their troupe; but that if the men took to the same follies and dissensions as the women, I should have to think otherwise.

It was a comfort to me to pass my hours of leisure among those lively-witted, humorous, civil, merry people. It gratified me to observe that the men were eagerly sought after and invited to the tables of the quality and honest folk, while the women received similar attentions from gentlefolk of their own sex, a thing almost unheard of with respect to others of their calling. Finally, I was pleased to see them thriving in their business and making profits by their theatre, which I had revived and continued to sustain by a long series of new and successful dramatic pieces. If prejudice or malignity were to cast it in my teeth that I had evil motives in this choice of my companions through so many years, I might easily turn the satire back against what is commonly called the respectable society of *casini*, assemblies, and caffès. In order not to incur hatred by describing inconvenient facts, I will, however, confine myself to begging my critics to reflect and to be indulgent for differences of taste.

Returning to my comic protegés, I have yet to say that the insinuation of so-called culture into our theatres gradually corrupted the customs of this well-

regulated family of actors, much in the same way as the advance of culture into private families corrupted domestic manners. Outsiders, hired at wages to swell the ranks and to take serious parts in tragedies or comedies, introduced a new freedom of thinking and behaving. The old habits of the troupe, which may perchance have only worn a feigned appearance of respectability, altered for the worse. The time has not arrived for describing this change, which I shall have to do in its proper place, since it was closely connected with important occurrences in my own life.

Some weaknesses are so entwined with our instincts as to be incurable. Such, in my case, are good faith and compliance, which often degenerated into silliness. During the whole course of my life, as my writings prove, and as is well known to my friends and acquaintances, I have always scourged hypocrisy. I cannot, however, deny the fact that the apparent honesty, piety, and good behaviour, in which my protegés persevered for so long a period, was convenient to their friends and extremely profitable to their pockets; whereas the freedom of thinking and acting introduced among them by the science of this depraved century and by so-called culture, brought them to the condition of the builders of the Tower of Babel.

I have seen them pass from ease to indigence, forget that they were relatives and friends—all at

war together, all suspicious, each man of his neighbour—all irreconcilable and hostile—in spite of frequently renewed attempts on my part to bring them into harmony again; so that, at the last, I had to withdraw from their society, as will be stated in the sequel of these Memoirs.

XLII.

The end of the rage for Goldoni and Chiari.—I go on amusing my fellow-citizens with plays.—Make reflections, and perhaps catch crabs.

We had arrived at the year 1766, when it became evident that my band of comedians, by this time well established in their theatre, and supported by the public, who flocked eagerly to see the pieces I provided for them, were about to win a decisive victory over our adversaries. Chiari's works stood revealed in all their native nakedness; the glamour of enchantment had departed. Those of Goldoni, in spite of their real merit, did not make the same effect as in the past. People noticed that he repeated himself; they discovered poverty of ideas, flaccidity, and faults of construction in his later pieces. They said that he was played out.

The truth is that a rage so vehement and fanatical as that created by Chiari and Goldoni was bound

to die away. They had been so much spoken and quarrelled about that their very names began to pall upon the ear. In Italy, moreover, there is no well-founded and intelligent respect for authors. Dramatists in particular are merely regarded as purveyors of ephemeral amusement. Perhaps Venice exceeds every other capital in this way of thinking. A Venetian citizen, to take a single instance, was congratulating Goldoni on the success of one of his comedies; then, as though ashamed of condescending to so trivial a theme, he added: "It is true that works of this sort are trifles, which do not deserve our serious attention; and yet I can imagine that you may have been gratified by the reception of your play."

Goldoni, with true business-like prudence, had compelled the shabby Italian comedians to pay him thirty sequins for every piece, good, bad, or indifferent, which he supplied them. I gave my dramatic fancies away gratis. It is very probable that, finding themselves eclipsed by what their rivals got for nothing, Goldoni's paymasters waxed insolent against him.

Chiari stopped writing when he saw that his dramas ceased to take. Goldoni went to Paris, to seek his fortune there, whereof we shall be duly informed in his Memoirs. Sacchi's company remained in possession of the field and earned a handsome competency.

It became a necessity, a sort of customary law dictated by my friendship, to present these actors

every year or two with pieces from my pen. The ability with which they had interpreted my fancies deserved gratitude; and the sympathy of the Venetians, who had so warmly welcomed them, called for recognition. Accordingly, I added the *Donna Serpente*, the *Zobeide*, and the *Mostro Turchino* to those dramatic fables which I have already mentioned. This brought us down to the year 1766.[1]

The new *genre* which I had brought into fashion, and which, by being confined to Sacchi's company, inflicted vast damage on their professional rivals, inspired other so-called poets with the wish to imitate me. They relied on splendid decorations, transformation scenes, and frigid buffooneries. They did not comprehend the allegorical meanings, nor the polite satire upon manners, nor the art of construction, nor the conduct of the plot, nor the real intrinsic force of the species I had handled. I say they did not comprehend the value of these things, because I do not want to say that they were deficient in power to command and use them. The result was that their pieces met with the condemnation which their contempt for me and for the public who appreciated me richly deserved.

You cannot fabricate a drama worthy to impress the public mind for any length of time by heaping up absurdities, marvels, scurrilities, prolixities, puerili-

[1] There is some inaccuracy here. See vol. i. p. 148, for the dates of Gozzi's *Fiabe*.

ties, insipidities, and nonsense. The neglect into which the imitations of my manner speedily fell proves this. Much the same may be said about those other species—romantic or domestic, intended to move tears or laughter—those cultured and realistic kinds of drama, as people called them, though they were generally devoid of culture and of realism, and were invariably as like each other as two peas, which occupied our stage for thirty years at least.[1] All the good and bad that has been written and printed about my fables; the fact that they still hold the stage in Italy and other countries where they are translated in spite of their comparative antiquity; the stupid criticisms which are still being vented against them by starving journalists and envious bores, who join the cry and follow these blind leaders of the blind—criticisms only based upon the titles and arguments I chose to draw from old wives' tales and stories of the nursery—all this proves that there is real stuff in the fabulous, poetical, allegorical *genre* which I created. I say this without any presumptuous partiality for the children of my fancy; nor do I resent the attacks which have been made upon them, for I am humane enough to pity the hungry and the passion-blinded.

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[1] Page 33 in vol. ii. of Gozzi is a good specimen of an interminable sentence broken up by me. It has thirty-nine lines of about eight words apiece, or 312 words, without a full stop. It begins with *Un' ammasso*, and ends on p. 34 with *commiserazione*.

Goldoni, who was then at Paris, vainly striving to revive the Italian theatre in that metropolis, heard of the noise my fables were making in Italy, and abased himself so far as to send a fabulous composition of his own fabrication back to Venice. It was called *Il Genio buono e il Genio cattivo*, and appeared at the theatre of S. Giov. Grisostomo, enjoying a long run. The cause of its success lay in the fact that his piece displayed dramatic art, agreeable characters, moral reflection, and some philosophy. I conclude, therefore, that allegorical fables on the stage are not so wholly contemptible.

At the same time, just as there are differences between the different kinds of dogs, fishes, birds, snakes, and so forth, though they all belong to the species of dogs, fishes, &c., so are there notable differences between Goldoni's *Genio buono e cattivo* and my ten *Fiabe*, though all are grouped under the one species of dramatic fable. Goldoni, who has deserved renown for his domestic comedies, had not the gifts necessary for producing poetic fables of this kind; nor could I ever understand why my ridiculous censors cast the ephemeral success of his two *Genj* in my teeth, with the hope of mortifying a pride I did not feel.

The dramatic fable, if written to engage the interest of the public and to keep its hold upon the theatre, is more difficult than any other species. Unless it contains a grandeur which imposes, some

impressive secret which enchants, novelty sufficient to arrest attention, eloquence to enthral, sententious maxims of philosophy, witty and attractive criticisms, dialogues prompted by the heart, and, above all, the great magic of seduction whereby impossibilities are made to seem real and evident to the mind and senses of the audience—unless it contains all these elements, I repeat, it will never produce a firm and distinctive impression, nor will it repay the pains and perseverance of our poor actors by its permanent pecuniary value. It may be that my fables possess none of these qualities. Yet the fact remains that they contrived to produce the effects I have described.

XLIII.

I re-open a lawsuit, and continue to scribble my fantastic pieces for the stage.

In this same year, 1766, my brothers warmly urged me to revive the lawsuit against Marchese Terzi of Bergamo.[1] Since our family documents had been dispersed, and only three old wills and some worm-eaten summaries remained to guide me, I obtained an injunction ordering the defendant to produce the deeds whereby he claimed the disputed

[1] See above, cap. xxx.

property, and the papers relating to several suits between his ancestors and ours. At last two enormous chests, full of musty writings, were delivered at the Magistracy of the Avvogaria. Perhaps my adversaries thought to dash my spirits and damp my ardour by this ocean of pages which had to be explored. If so, they were mistaken. I procured one of those licenses, which are technically called courtesies, from Signor Daniele Zanchi, the defendant's advocate, to study the documents at his chambers, and set myself down with imperturbable phlegm to peruse millions of lines in antique characters, faded, half-effaced, semi-Gothic, and for the most part hieroglyphical. I selected those which seemed to the purpose, and had forty-two volumes of transcripts filled at my cost by Signor Zanchi's copyists.

Painful circumstances leave ineffaceable impressions on the memory. The examination of those vast masses of manuscript, word by word and letter by letter, so different from delightful literature in prose or verse, taxed every nerve and fibre. I well remember that my study of them lasted over more than two months, in the dead of a hard snowy winter. Signor Zanchi, taking pity on my shivering wretchedness, kindly furnished me with a brazier of live coals; and yet I thought, what with the irksome labour and the cold, that I should have to breathe my last between the walls of the fortress of my enemies.

I shall not weary my readers with a detailed account of this tedious lawsuit. My brother Almorò, whose heart was always in the right place, contributed to the expenses according to his means. My brother Francesco, remaining a wary economist, refused to exceed an annual payment of 150 *lire* during the progress of the suit. My brother Gasparo only lent his name and assent. The following anecdote is characteristic of his easy-going, popularity-loving temperament. Some gentlemen, friends and supporters of the Marquis, asked him with serious faces: "What the devil is this annoyance you are causing Marchese Terzi?" To which he shrugged his shoulders and answered: "I know nothing about the matter. They are devices of my brother Carlo, a litigious fellow, who thinks that he is in the right here." He did not mean, I fully believe, to shun responsibility and odium by shifting the blame to my shoulders. This answer was only of a piece with the pacific indolence which made him bear infinite wretchedness in his own home.

In the course of two years I had to expend 17,000 *lire* on the costs of this suit; and had it not been for the generosity of friends, among whom Signor Innocenzio Massimo stood first, Marchese Terzi would have scored one of those victories which make us inclined to doubt of Providence. Beside the anxiety and incessant labour which preyed upon my health and spirits, I was annoyed by my adversary's power-

ful friends, who went about the town denouncing me for a quarrelsome, vexatious, captious, and inequitable fellow. Rude rebukes addressed to me by such persons I met with significant smiles and silence, never deigning to take up the cudgels in my own defence against accusations which I knew to be discourteous and baseless. In addition to all these sources of discomfort, I had to fight the battle single-handed; for my excellent friend and advocate, Signor Antonio Testa, was compelled by stress of business to leave me in the heat of action.

It is not to be wondered at that I fell ill at last. But what will seem more wonderful, nay, almost incredible, is that I sought distraction during my few leisure hours in planning and composing dramatic pieces. I used to take sheets of paper on which I had sketched the outlines of scenes in my pocket down to a coffee-house on the Riva degli Schiavoni. There I engaged a room facing San Giorgio, had coffee brought, and ordered pen and ink. Thus furnished, I forgot my troubles for a while in the elaboration of soliloquies and dialogues. It was in this way that, while my suit dragged on through three tempestuous years, I produced the *Augel Belverde*, the *Rè de' Genj*, the *Donna Vendicativa*, the *Caduta di Donna Elvera*, and the *Pubblico Segreto*. I flatter myself that none of these plays betrayed the melancholy and distraction of a harassed brain. They were welcomed with enthusiasm by the public,

and brought fame and profit to my friends the actors.

After a long course of anxious litigation, complicated by somewhat tortuous proceedings on the part of my opponents, the cause was settled in the following way. I obtained as compensation for my claims a farm of about forty-six acres in the Paduan district, several houses in Venice, some substantial and some ruinous, a sum of money in the funds of the Mint, and three thousand ducats by way of repayment of arrears. A solemn agreement was signed, which may God preserve unbroken through all the centuries to come! After paying the costs and debts contracted in this long campaign, and assigning their portions of the balance to my brothers, I took breath again, like a man broken by a tedious and disastrous journey, who stretches out his wearied limbs upon a bed of down.

XLIV.

The beginning of dissensions in Sacchi's company.—My attitude of forbearance and ridiculous heroisms.

Having spent ten years of serene recreation among my professional friends, the time had come for clouds to gather on the horizon. *Le due notti affannose*, my last dramatic venture, was the source of much profit to Sacchi. But the company, while gaining strength

from actors hired to sustain serious parts, began to degenerate in their behaviour. Though they professed the same severe morality as formerly, I noticed signs of change and of dissension. Differences between relatives spread the seeds of future dissolution. The imported actors helped the theatre, but introduced pernicious ideas into this previously happy family. They criticised the administration of the property; accused the managers of injustice, tyranny, even fraud; sympathised with those who thought themselves oppressed; threw stones, and carefully concealed the hands which launched them. Pluming themselves upon their sapience, they contrived to persuade the troupe that the plays I gave for nothing were not so beneficial as the latter blindly believed. They ascribed the crowds which filled the theatre to the attraction of stage decorations and their own spirited performance. Not unlike the fly in Æsop's fable, they exclaimed: "Look at the dust which we are raising!" By artfully reckoning the cost of putting my fables on the stage, and by insinuating calumnies against the managers, they brought some of the sharers into a state of mutiny, made them depreciate my services, and stirred up anger and suspicion against Sacchi. Finally, they got them to think it would be more advantageous to exchange their shares for salaries, and prepared them for hating one another cordially.

The older and more sagacious comedians still con-

tinued to pay me court and beg for my poetical assistance. I thought it, however, wiser to suspend my collaboration for a year or two, without showing annoyance, or letting it be known that I was aware of what was being said against me. I could not take a better way of bringing them back to reason; and my private engagements provided me with a good pretext for withdrawing my assistance.

In the first year after my retirement, the public began to grumble at the lack of new pieces. In the second, it began to growl. The audiences thinned, and Sacchi's theatre became a desert. There were not wanting folk who from the boxes shouted insults at the actors. Their dejection increased daily; and then they all with one accord broke into protestations of affection and fervent entreaties for my help.

I had accustomed the public to novel kinds of drama, and the company had seconded my efforts. I did not think it right to assist them for ten years and then to drop them. To condescend to take affront at what comedians say or do is utterly impossible for me. I could, indeed, have laughed in their faces and turned my back. But I preferred to laugh in my sleeve while once more coming to their aid with the energy and good results which I shall presently describe.

The owners of the other theatres in Venice, finding themselves extremely injured by the plays I gave to Sacchi, kept making me proposals to write

for their houses; and the pretty actresses who worked there seconded these misplaced endeavours by spreading snares to catch me with their charms. Though my old protegés would have richly deserved it, I had the burlesque heroism not to desert them.

Sacchi often complained of having to remain in theatres out of the way and inconvenient for the people, such as S. Samuele and S. Angelo, where only striking novelties like mine could draw large houses. He was always sighing to get the lease of S. Salvadore,[1] a most popular theatre, since it is situated at the centre of the town, within easy reach of its densely inhabited quarters. Now it so happened that this theatre was occupied by a company which performed pieces in the fashion introduced by Chiari and Goldoni. I have already said that the vogue of such things had declined; and the proprietor, his Excellency Vendramini, was anxious to secure me in the interest of his failing house. He sent a priest of my acquaintance, a certain Don Baldassare, as envoy, offering me his cordial regards, together with considerable emoluments, if I would pass from Sacchi's company to that which occupied S. Samuele. I draped myself in the dignity of Attilius Regulus, and replied that I did not write for money, but for pastime. As long as Sacchi's troupe kept together and remained competent, I did not mean to give away my work to any other.

[1] This theatre was also called S. Luca.

If his Excellency had the fancy to see plays of mine performed at his theatre, he could indulge it by placing the house at Sacchi's disposal. Not many months passed before I was chosen by that gentleman as arbitrator between him and Sacchi. I acted the solicitor, drew up a lease, and installed my manager in the theatre his heart was set on.

I should have liked to devote myself entirely to my private studies; but the responsibility I had taken by transferring Sacchi's company to S. Samuele, together with the informal engagement I felt under to Signor Vendramini, made me resume my task of writing for the stage. I ought to add that my old habit of associating with the actors weighed strongly with me in this circumstance. Therefore a new chapter of some fourteen years in my life was opened, the principal events of which I mean to write with all the candour and the piquancy I can.

XLV.

Dangerous innovations in Sacchi's company.—My attempts to arrange matters, my threats, prognostications, and obstinate persistence on the point of honour to support my protegés—things sufficient to move reasonable mirth against me.

The grant of the theatre at San Salvadore for the next year had hardly been handed over to Sacchi,

when the other troupe, who were expelled to make room for him, engaged the theatre at Sant' Angelo, which he was leaving, and began at once to plot revenge. They tried, by flatteries and promises of money (always needed by Italian comedians), to circumvent the best actors of the company, among whom were Cesare Derbes, the excellent Pantalone, and Agostino Fiorilli, the famous Tartaglia. In fact, they did seduce these two champions of impromptu comedy to desert Sacchi's ranks and join their squadron, more with the object of weakening our forces than of strengthening theirs, since their own members were unfit for any performances but those of the so-called cultivated drama.

This desertion mortified the sharers in Sacchi's company, and they whispered their misfortune in my ears. For my own part, I was sorry to think that the quartette of masks, real natural wonders, who made such pleasant mirth in concert, should be scattered. I determined, therefore, to try whether I could not dissuade these two actors from the somewhat shabby step they had resolved on. When I remonstrated with Derbes, who was my gossip, the answer he gave me ran as follows: "Precisely because I feared that you would attempt to separate me from my new comrades, and because I know my inability to refuse you anything, I concealed the agreement from your eyes, and signed it in secret, so that I might not have it in my power to comply with

your request. It grieves me that I am no longer able to meet your wishes." On hearing this preposterous excuse, I lost my humour for a moment, and burst into serious reproaches. He assumed a theatrical air of sorrow, and defended himself by repeating the complaints which were current among the disaffected members of Sacchi's troupe. I contented myself with prophesying that he would find himself without place or part in his new company, adding by way of menace that I should well know how to make him repent of his desertion to the enemy.

Then I repaired to Fiorilli with as much solicitude as though I were bent on averting some grave disaster from myself. Him I found more tractable. He had not signed his agreement; and I was able to reconcile him with his old comrades, and to make him subscribe a paper, by which he promised to remain with them for the next three years.

A bad system of etiquette divides the actors and actresses of every troupe in Italy into first, second, third, and so forth. It happened at this time that Sacchi had dismissed his first actress, Regina Cicucci, a very able artist, but one who had not won great fame with Venetian playgoers. "What a fine stroke of business it would be," said he to me one day, "if we could rob our rivals of their first actress, Mme. Caterina Manzoni! The revenge would be complete and just, and I should be provided with a

leading lady. I am afraid, however," he added, "that my company would not suit her." Signora Manzoni was my good friend. I appreciated her talents, her personal attractions, her cultivated manners, and her educated mind. She had often asked me whether I could not introduce her into Sacchi's company; and though I did not usually mix myself up with such affairs, the present occasion and Sacchi's speech inclined me to attempt a negotiation.

Accordingly, I made proposals to the lady, which she welcomed with great delight and profuse expressions of gratitude. Some differences with regard to appointments and other details arose. These I settled, like an able broker, and brought the bargain to an agreement. When I presented the papers for her signature, the beautiful young woman met me with an air of sadness, which added to her charms. She looked as though she had not the courage to address me. I did not understand what this meant, and strove to hearten her up. At length she told me, dropping a few lovely tears, that her former friends and comrades, when they got wind of her meditated desertion, had come to her weeping violently, and had flung themselves at her feet imploring her not to abandon them to certain ruin. Moved by a spirit of compassion, she had signed a paper which obliged her to remain with them for some years to come.

Although I knew the tenderness of her heart, I

did not think her capable of such a breach of promise through mere sensibility. She must have had stronger reasons for breaking the engagement she had entered into with me; and if she ever writes her Memoirs, we shall hear of them.[1] Perhaps I ought to have lost my jovial humour, as I did with Derbes. I could not do so in the face of so much beauty. I only told her, with a smile upon my lips, that she was her own mistress; Sacchi might get a first actress of any sort he could; I should have wit enough to make the person as able an artist as my fair renegade. With these words I engaged myself to a new point of honour.

I have never regretted that I treated Signora Manzoni in this courteous fashion. She has always shown me the attentions of delicate and cordial politeness; and it is only justice to declare that she possesses qualities which would be estimable in a gentlewoman. A few years after the events related here she married, retired from the profession, and devoted herself to the education of her two little boys in sound moral and religious principles.

When I reported the failure of my negotiation to Sacchi, he replied roughly: "I knew that the person in question could never have adjusted herself to my

[1] This looks as though Gozzi had reason to believe that Mme. Manzoni would write her autobiography. Whether she did so or not, I am unable to say. But the remark shows how popular and common self-indited Memoirs had become.

company." Then he pushed forward his correspondence for the engagement of another prima donna.

I should like my readers to believe that my intervention in the affair I have described was due principally to my regard for the Cavaliere [1] who granted his theatre at my request to Sacchi's company. Really afraid that their internal dissensions, rivalries, and intrigues might reduce them to a state of impotence, and that his interests would suffer in consequence, I wished to avoid having any share in this disaster. A barren and old-fashioned delicacy!

XLVI.

Sacchi forces me to give advice.—Teodora Ricci enters his company as first actress.—An attempt at sketching her portrait.—The beginnings of my interest in this comedian.

Whenever Sacchi had to engage a prima donna, all the other actresses rose up in tumult. Why they should have done so, when the engagement was merely temporary, remains a mystery. That they were connected among themselves by blood or marriage does not explain their conspiracy. The newcomers had to endure a martyrdom of criticism, depreciation in their art, and gross calumny in their morals. Who knows whether the prospect of such

[1] That is, the Venetian noble Antonio Vendramini.

imminent tribulation did not form one reason of Signora Manzoni's defection? These details do not appear to have any bearing on my Memoirs; but it will soon be seen that they have only too much.

Sacchi always affected, out of prudence, to consult with me on his affairs, especially at this time, when the change of theatre had disorganised his system of management. Accordingly, he informed me one day that he was in treaty with two first actresses, and asked for my advice. One of them was Signora Maddalena Battagia, a Tuscan by birth, talented, but no longer in her prime, incapable of taking part in the *Commedia dell' Arte*, and extremely exacting with regard to precedence, etiquette, and a substantial salary. The other was Signora Teodora Ricci; from what he heard about her, she was a beginner, young, full of spirit, with a fine figure and voice, who had been applauded in every city where she had appeared; moreover, she was accustomed to act in the *Commedia dell' Arte*. She had a husband, of some distinction as a player; and Sacchi could get them both at a salary of only 520 ducats a year.

I had never heard before of either. But after weighing and comparing their testimonials and correspondence, I gave a laconic answer: "Engage Signora Ricci with her husband." This is precisely what Sacchi had resolved in his own mind on doing; and his appeal to me for counsel was only a comedian's way of feigning esteem and sense of dependence.

The Ricci and her husband were bound over under articles for three years at a salary of 520 ducats. This was a wretched stipend for a poor actress, who had to provide herself with a decent wardrobe on the stage, to meet the expenses of frequent journeys, and to maintain a husband and a son; and who, moreover, was expecting her confinement, and was about to expose herself to all the calumnies, criticisms, and venomous detractions of the allied women of the company.

My new protegé reached Venice in the Lent of 1771. I received an invitation from Sacchi to meet her and her husband at his house one evening, on their arrival from Genoa. He wanted me to hear her recite a passage from some tragedy, in order that I might form an estimate of her manner, her talent, and her disposition. I saw at once that she was a young woman of fine figure, though her pregnancy took off from its appearance. Her face was pitted with the small-pox; but this did not prevent it from being theatrically effective at a distance. The abundance of her beautiful blonde hair made up for some defects of feature. Her clothes, which betrayed a scanty purse, were well put on; and she carried them with such an air and grace that no one stopped to think whether they were of silk or wool, new or worn. She seemed to be somewhat constrained by the unfamiliar society in which she found herself. I could not make my mind up whether her reserve

and shyness were the result of timidity or cunning. Yet I detected in her something of habitual impatience. She chafed because her husband did her little honour in our conversation. He, good man, slept sweetly, in spite of the clandestine nudges which she gave him.

She recited the fragment of a tragic scene in verse, with a fine and powerful voice, sound sense, intelligence, and a fire which gave good hopes of her in her profession, especially in fierce vituperative parts. I noticed a trifle of hardness and monotony in her declamation, and some other defects which could be remedied. One incurable fault she had; this was the movement of her lips, which often amounted to what is called making a wry face. Her mouth, not small by nature, had been relaxed and ravaged at its angles by the small-pox, so that the poor young woman could not overcome the involuntary fault of which I speak. I must add a physiological observation I have made, which bears upon this point. When we feel disgust for any object disagreeable to our senses, we naturally express it by a writhing of the mouth. The Ricci, through prejudice, or through something proud and wayward in her temper, was always hearing and seeing things which she felt nauseous and repulsive, and this repugnance stamped itself upon her features in a contortion of the lips. Enforcing and stereotyping the physical blemish in question,

THE RICCI RECITES BEFORE GOZZI AND SACCHI

Original Etching by Ad. Lalauze

it became an ineradicable habit, or rather second nature.

When the trial-piece was finished, I paid her some deserved compliments, and sought to inspire her with a courage which seemed lacking in her demeanour. The other actresses hung upon my words; but Sacchi, more attentive to his interests than to what I was saying, turned toward me and spoke: "Signor Conte, I have engaged this young woman at your advice; pray bear in mind that you have a duty to perform—that is, of making her useful to our company." I replied that I would do the utmost in my power, both for him and for her, as soon as I had made myself acquainted with her real gifts for comedy and tragedy. On the faces of the other actresses I read a sullen sadness and a disposition to squirt poison.

The company was bound for Mantua. Signora Ricci begged for my assistance in studying the new parts assigned to her during the few days which remained before they left Venice. I complied; and hardly a day passed without my going to her lodgings, and giving her the instructions I thought needful. Feeling my honour pledged by what I had said to Derbes and Signora Manzoni, and wishing to establish a strong troupe in Cavaliere Vendramini's theatre, I had pronounced a good opinion of young Ricci's future, and I was sincerely anxious not to find it faulty. She received me with affa-

bility and an air of satisfaction. As the days went on, I discovered in her gifts above the average.

Sometimes I found her plunged in sadness; and on inquiring the reason, she told me that she saw certain ruin staring her in the face. She had entered a company of actresses and actors related by blood, and all allied against her. She was alone, without protection and support. Her mother had reproved and terrified her for having accepted this position, prophesying that she would be discredited and driven out of Venice, to the loss of all the fame which she had gained in other cities. I laughed at her fears, told her that her presentiments were phantoms, and tried to make her believe the great falsehood that real merit always ends by overcoming obstacles. I promised to write pieces adapted to her talents. If she could but once make herself necessary to the company by winning the favour of the public, all her difficulties would vanish. But this could only be achieved by conquering her trepidation and steeling her mind against untoward circumstances.

The respect I enjoyed in Sacchi's troupe for past favours conferred and future benefits expected impressed her mind; and she resolved to cultivate my friendship as her only stay. Her poverty moved my compassion; and I liked her civil hearty ways of greeting me, which seemed sincere. I wanted to study her disposition in order to compose parts suited

for her; but time was short, and I could not do much. Meanwhile, my visits and attentions roused the jealousy of the other actresses. They used to question me with affected nonchalance upon the Ricci's talent; confessed they saw great faults in her, and doubted whether she could ever be of service to the company; but ingenuously added that they hoped they were mistaken. Seeing through their artifice, I repeated my favourable prognostications, and engaged myself to secure the fulfilment of my prophecies.

It was then that calumnies began to fly abroad against my poor new pupil's moral character. That was only what had to be expected. Everybody knew the reports for facts, and nobody had set them going. I have said that my habit of protecting the persecuted amounted to a vice. Now that she was attacked in her honour, I vowed with greater fervour to defend and rehabilitate her.

The troupe departed in due course of time for Mantua; thence they passed to Verona, where the Ricci was delivered of a baby, which Heaven in kindness removed from this world. Letters arrived from these cities depreciating her talents, accusing her of invincible defects, and prejudicing the public mind against her. Meanwhile, the partisans of two able actresses in the rival company at S. Samuele were not idle; and I foresaw that I should have formidable obstacles to overcome before I succeeded in esta-

blishing her reputation. This only made me the more obstinate.

Not being thoroughly acquainted as yet with her character and special gifts, I composed a drama called *La Innamorata da Vero*.[1] My object was to place her in different lights, and to give her the opportunity of hitting the public taste in one point or another. She had to play the part of a lady in love, exiled, forced to disguise herself as a waiter, then as a gipsy, then as a soldier, then as a gentleman of quality, in order to hide from the pursuit of justice and to remain faithful to her passionate attachment. At the least I hoped that great pains in the performance of this rôle might win for her indulgence and favour. I had reason to see that I was mistaken in my expectations and my judgment. The piece, though it proved successful in itself, was not adapted to the Ricci. Sacchi, however, wrote about it and the actress enthusiastically from Mantua, where it was exhibited.

I shall now have to describe the début of this young artist at Venice, the difficulties we met with, the triumph which finally confirmed my prophecies, and the friendship which I maintained with her for the space of six years. Many of my friends have asked for the real history of this friendship. It was always my habit to waste no breath in talking, but to use up several pens without fatigue in

[1] Printed in vol. ix. of the *Opere*, ed. cit.

writing. I shall, therefore, very likely be too long and prolix in my narrative of a friendship, which folk are quite at liberty to call love if they like. Since it occupied six years of my life, I cannot omit it; but every one is at liberty to skip the following chapters if they find them tedious.[1]

XLVII.

Teodora Ricci makes her début at Venice without marked success.—My reasons for feeling engaged in honour to support her.

My histrionic phalanx returned to Venice, and took possession for the first time of the theatre at S. Salvatore, deprived of one of their best actors, Derbes. The managers of the company wished to keep the public in suspense about the new actress for the first few nights. This is the common policy of such people. They reason thus: "We are all of us novelties at the beginning of the season. Let us keep the new actor in reserve to stimulate the

[1] It cannot be denied that Gozzi has spun out the history of his liaison with Teodora Ricci to a tedious length, giving the episode of Pier Antonio Gratarol an importance which it is far from deserving. I intend therefore to abridge the chapters which he invites his readers to skip. But, with the view of preserving unity of style, I shall not drop the first person singular, and shall select, so far as this is possible, nothing but phrases of Gozzi to translate.

public when our own attractions fall off. Come what may, we are sure to have our purses full that night at least." Desire of gain is their only motive principle.

At last the time came for poor Ricci to be exhibited. The flaming announcement of *new actress, new play, La Innamorata da Vero*, drew a full house. My piece was well received; but the Ricci was voted a barely tolerable artiste. This pleased the other actresses of the troupe and amused me, who had formed a very decided opinion of her real ability. She next appeared as the Queen of England in the old play of the *Conte d'Essex*. Poorly dressed, she raised no applause, although she acted well; and her capital sentence seemed to be irrevocable.

About this time Sacchi asked me to translate a French play called *Fajel*,[1] in which he proposed to give the part of Gabrielle to the débutante Ricci. I remember that I scribbled off this version in the small rooms of the theatre while my friends were acting; an earthen pipkin with some ink in it and a dirty stump of a pen, supplied by the green-room man, helped me through it in a few evenings.

Before it appeared I chose to have my translation published, together with an essay inveighing against the habit of importing plays from France. The stir caused by this essay, together with other circumstances, drew a large house on the first night of

[1] By the playwright Arneau.

Fajel. Ricci sustained the part of Gabrielle admirably; but it so happened that Signora Manzoni had recently been acting a nearly identical rôle at the theatre of S. Angelo, and her partisans determined to crush the débutante, whom they considered a presumptuous rival. This third failure made her ruin palpable to every eye.

Fervid and impetuous by nature, proud as Lucifer, and intensely ambitious, she chafed and wept, took to her bed, and raged there like a lioness, cursing the hour when she had joined Sacchi's troupe and set her foot in Venice. As far as possible, she concealed the true cause of her fury, and dwelt on family difficulties, her poverty, and a new confinement in prospect. To my attempts at consolation, though flattering and reasonable, she turned a deaf ear.

It was then that, having gained a perfect knowledge of her character, I composed my *Principessa Filosofa*,[1] precisely with a view to her. When I read it to the company, they broke forth into their usual extravagant laudations. But just at this time they were plotting the removal of the Ricci; and the actresses most interested in expelling her from the troupe raised obstacles against the *Principessa* being put upon the stage. They buzzed about from ear to ear that my drama was languid and tiresome. I had omitted the four masks, and had constructed the piece with the sole object of bolstering up an actress

[1] Printed in vol. v. of the *Opere*, ed. cit.

already out of credit and rejected by the public. The Ricci chafed with rage; while I continued to laugh, knowing well that I should find the means of bringing these passion-blinded creatures back to reason.

Just then it happened that the patrician of Venice, Francesco Gritti, one of our best and liveliest pens, translated Piron's tragedy of *Gustavus Vasa* from the French.[1] At my request, he gave this play to Sacchi, assigning the part of Adelaide to Teodora Ricci. New difficulties and new intrigues arose among the jealous actresses. These I put down with a high hand, the play in question being not my own, but my distinguished friend's donation to the company. La Ricci learned her part with diligence and ease. Her chief anxiety was about her costume; for the managers refused to make her any advances on this score, and her rivals, who took subordinate parts in the tragedy, were straining all the resources of their lengthier purse to outshine her by the wardrobe. I amused myself enormously at their ill-founded expectations. When the night arrived, the play was very decently got up, and the Ricci entered on the scene far better dressed than any of her comrades. *Gustavus Vasa* had a decided

[1] Francesco Gritti, of the ancient patrician family, was born in 1740 and died in 1811. His translations of French plays appeared in two vols. at Venice in 1788. Some of his poems in Venetian dialect were published in 1815. Venezia, Alvisopoli.

success; and the Ricci, who played Adelaide well, but certainly not better than the three parts which had well-nigh ruined her, was encouraged by a fair amount of applause. I could see how much good this little gleam of sunshine did her.

Meanwhile days flew by without anything being said about my *Principessa Filosofa*. I thereupon determined to try what a little artifice could do. I began by confiding to some of our actors that I could not resist the wish to see this piece upon the stage; and that appreciating Sacchi's reasons for not venturing to take the risk of it, I was thinking of offering my *Principessa* to the company at S. Angelo. Signora Manzoni, I added, seemed to be admirably fitted for the leading part. No sooner was it whispered that I intended to follow Derbes to the rival camp, than marvellous alacrity began to be displayed. Sacchi, always violent and excessive, insisted that the *Principessa Filosofa* should be got up and ready for representation in the course of a few days. In fact, this piece appeared upon the 8th of February 1772. The Ricci, carefully coached by me, sustained the title-rôle with astonishing spirit. She was welcomed with thunders of applause; and a run of eighteen nights to overflowing houses established her reputation as an artist of incomparable energy and spirit. This joint triumph of author and actress made the latter necessary to Sacchi's company. Yet some of her comrades persisted in regarding her

with covered rancour. They never acknowledged her talents, and ascribed her success to the rôle I had composed for her.

XLVIII.

A pliant disposition is apt to neglect the dictates of reflection. —I proceed with my narrative regarding the Ricci and myself.

If the company loaded me with gratitude, Teodora Ricci was not behindhand with the same sweet incense. She professed herself wholly and simply indebted to my zeal, good management, and friendship for her victory. She did everything in her power, and laid herself out in every way to secure my daily visits. So long as I frequented her house, she felt safe from her persecutors; and her main ambition was to commit me to an open and deliberate partiality. She did not, however, know the true characters of her comrades, nor yet my fundamental principles and temperament; nor, what was worse, did she know herself.

Had I declared that open partiality which she desired, it is certain that I should have exposed her to still more trying enmities and persecutions. The managers of the troupe, governed exclusively by calculations of interest, would have felt themselves

compelled to curry favour with me by indulging her in all her whims, demands, breaches of discipline, and a thousand feminine caprices. Nothing could be more alien to my real character than to make myself the proud and domineering protector of one actress to the injury of her companions. Besides, her views and mine were so fundamentally at variance upon some elementary points of conduct, that I doubted whether a liaison between us could ever be of long duration. Light-headed, vain, and sensitive to flattery, she had no regard for prudence and propriety; nor did she recognise those faults in herself which were always involving her in difficulties. I knew, moreover, that characters like hers must sooner or later incline to those who caress their foibles and pervert their judgment, while they come to regard their real friends and honest counsellors as tiresome pedants. She had no grounds for believing that I was in love with her. Yet, such was her self-assurance, that she interpreted my kind offices on her behalf into signs of submission to her charms. Finally, though I was far from believing all she said about her affection for my person, I determined to extend to her a cordial friendship.

There are two classes of sinners, whom the world, however dissolute, will always hold in abhorrence—the shameless cynic and the hypocrite. Libertines invariably attempt to confound prudent and respectful friends of women with the odious tribe of hypo-

crites.[1] I delighted in the theatre. I was known, appreciated, and courted by actors and actresses of all sorts, composers, singers, ballet-dancers. They came to me for advice and support on all occasions. I had to write pieces for them, prologues, epilogues, and what not. I was consulted about the arrangement of pantomimic scenes, dances, words for music. If the innumerable actresses with whom I conversed were to give their testimony, it would appear that I never took advantage of these opportunities to play the part of a seducer or a libertine. These Memoirs I am writing, together with the whole tenour of my life through a long course of years, suffice to clear me from the imputation of hypocrisy. Some of my readers will probably suppose that I am making a vain parade of philosophy in order to gain credit for virtues I did not possess. Others will call me a simpleton for not availing myself more freely of my exceptional position among the beauties of the stage. What I am going to relate concerning my friendship for the Ricci will show that I erred upon the side of simplicity and folly It was my fixed intention to benefit her, and at the same time to benefit the troupe I had taken under my protection, by making her an able artist and verifying my own opinion of her talents in the teeth of jealousy and opposition.

She had spirit, a good voice, a retentive memory,

[1] Gozzi is here answering Gratarol, who had called him a hypocrite in his *Narrazione.*

extraordinary rapidity of perception, and a fine figure, which she knew how to set off to the best advantage. On the other hand, she was inattentive to the conduct of a dialogue, deficient in naturalness and in real sensibility for the rôles she undertook. These defects, which are fatal to scenical illusion, proceeded from lack of intelligence, want of real heart for her business, and all kinds of feminine distractions. Some literary culture would have been of service to her; but, like all Italian actresses, she was deficient in such culture. According to her own account, she had been the most neglected of five or more sisters. After taking some lessons in dancing, she abandoned that branch of the profession because of a physical weakness in her knee-joints. Her mother, poor, and with a drunken husband, then made her the domestic drudge. Since she showed some talent for acting, however, a certain Pietro Rossi begged this woman to let her enter his company of players. She made no difficulties; and signing the girl's forehead with a large maternal cross, sent her out into the world with this practical injunction: "Go, and earn your bread; do not come back to be a burden to the family, where there are too many mouths to feed already." Throwing herself with courage and closed eyes into her new career, Teodora won applause by her natural aptitude for acting, and by the charm of her youth. The piece I wrote for her placed her well before the public, and I was not at all doubtful of her future

success. Yet I could not but apprehend that her defective moral education, her inflammable and reckless disposition, might make me one day repent of my cordiality and intimacy.

In conversation with this young woman I enjoyed no exchange of wit or sentiment, no perspicacity of intellect, no piquant sallies and discussions. On the other hand, her way of meeting me was always frank and open; she showed much decency and neatness in her poverty; told anecdotes with comic grace; mimicked her comrades, the actresses, with spirit; evinced a real repugnance for immodesty; betrayed the ingenuousness of her nature by a hundred little traits. What above all attracted me towards her was that she could not tell a lie without showing by involuntary blushes how much the effort cost her. Time taught me that I ought to mistrust her apparent ingenuousness. The artless sallies with which she turned old friends and benefactors into ridicule made me reflect that she might come to treat me in like manner. Her blushes, when she told a fib, did not spring from a dislike of lying, but from anger with herself for not being able to distort the truth more cleverly. Yet self-love is a weakness so ingrained in human frailty, that men are always ready to believe that they will fare better than their neighbours, because they think they have deserved better, or fancy themselves preferred by the woman on whose very faults they put an

indulgent interpretation. This was my case with the Ricci.

I was never able to induce her to sacrifice even a few hours a day to reading good books or exercising her mind by writing. Arguments, entreaties, reproaches were all thrown away. She excused herself by pleading her domestic duties; and though I was ever anxious to spend our time together in useful studies, as I had done with other actresses, I could not bring her to do more than con the parts she had to play upon the stage. Probably she thought that her native pluck and talent were sufficient to sustain her without troubling her brains by serious work. The duties which she always pleaded consisted in sitting at her toilet-table before the eternal looking-glass, arranging laces, changing ribands, altering the folds of veils, matching colours, and such-like frivolities. All these things are useful with a view to stage effect; but exclusive devotion to them distracts the mind from the higher exigencies of dramatic art, leads an actress to court applause by illegitimate means, and brings her in course of time to mere posing and peacocking upon the boards before the eyes of voluptuaries in the boxes. The Ricci was only too prone to such faults; and besides, her purse could not stand the expenses of her toilette.

When I ventured to express my fears upon these points, she betrayed her real way of thinking by replies to the following effect: "If we do not earn

more than our fixed wages, how on earth are we poor actresses to hold out in a profession like ours?" I did not conceal my abhorrence of the principles implied in such remarks; and she professed that she had only spoken in jest. At the same time, her behaviour was so good, she ruled her house with such economy, paid her debts so regularly, and conducted herself with such propriety, that I hoped, by good advice and by getting her salary increased, to save her from the evil influences of a misdirected early training. Vain illusion to flatter oneself that one can ever cure an actress of the faults instilled in her from childhood! I was perhaps blinded by the partiality I felt for her; and no man, face to face with a woman, can trust the clearness of his insight. Six years of continual assiduity, friendship, benefits, were not worth one straw against the poison she had imbibed. The woman who, with a sound education, might have become a person of true culture and a real friend, gave herself up to flattery and her own perverted inclinations; so that in the end she brought upon me troubles which the world has judged of serious importance and public gravity.[1]

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[1] This and the ensuing chapters throw light upon Gozzi's intention when he wrote chaps. xl. xli. above. The generalities of the earlier chapters square point by point with the particularities of the later. It looks as if he wished to prepare his readers for a special self-apologetical statement of his case against Mme. Ricci. We need not impute to him insincerity or false suggestion. When he wrote these Memoirs, the manners and customs of comedians were patent to the world, and he

XLIX.

I publicly avow my friendship for Mme. Ricci.—Efforts made to secure her advancement.—I become godfather to her child, and indulge in foolish hopes about her future.

Before entering into those open and formal ties of friendship which in Italy carry something of the nature of an obligation, I thought it right to warn Signora Ricci with regard to certain matters.[1] I pointed out that she was a member of a company renowned for its good character, and that she had already been exposed to calumny by her detractors. This ought to make her circumspect in repelling the advances of men of pleasure who might compromise her reputation. For myself, I meant to be her avowed friend, her daily visitor, and cavalier in

probably uttered no more than the truth about them. Yet the forensic cleverness of a pleader may be detected in the account he gives of his relations with this woman. Considering their intimacy, he does not act quite chivalrously in the exposure of its dissolution. At this distance of time we cannot ascertain the facts. Gozzi was perhaps consistent and veracious in his disclaimer of more than a liaison of friendship. The reader of the following chapters must decide for himself whether the writer of them was carefully manipulating and colouring circumstances he wished to attenuate.

[1] Gozzi means that he had assumed the rôle of Cicisbeo to Mme. Ricci.

public; but she must not think that I wanted to play the part of a lover, far less of a flatterer. My age, which bordered upon fifty, and my temperament were enough to prevent me from making any foolish pretensions to her favours. Should she find herself in need, through the failure of her monthly salary to meet expenses, she might count upon my purse. If, in spite of my good counsels, she increased her reputation for light conduct, I should be obliged to break with her at once and for ever. On the other hand, if my principles were distasteful to her, she had only to speak the word, and I would leave her absolutely at liberty. So long as I supported her in public and championed her honour as a woman and her fame as an artist, I had the right to expect conduct from her conformable to my avowed philosophy of life.

To these Quixotical discourses she replied by saying that all honest folk congratulated her upon acquiring my favour. They urged her to do all in her power to strengthen our alliance, and to avoid everything which could make me leave her. Nay, more: her spiritual director, in the course of confession, had exhorted her to remain by me, a man whom he regarded as a marvel of our century. This I thought a little exaggerated; it smacked of the stage.

The Ricci's husband was a good sort of fellow, who had been a bookseller, and had acquired a kind

of literary fanaticism in that business.[1] All day and night he scribbled volumes, which were sure, he said, to be the source of vast profit to himself and his heirs. Absorbed in these barren studies, he abandoned the household to his wife, philosophically making no claims on her attention. Shoes in holes and muddy stockings never troubled him. But meanwhile his health was being ruined. He grew as lean as a corpse and spat blood from the lungs, while bending over his beloved desk. His wife vainly scolded him, predicting that he was sure to fall into a consumption, which might infect his family. He pitied her gross ignorance, and continued to immolate himself upon the altar of learning. How this ill-assorted couple ever came together I cannot imagine. They appeared, however, to like each other, and lived on fairly good terms.

An income of 500 ducats was wholly insufficient for man and wife and child, with an expected confinement, and the expenses of a theatrical wardrobe

[1] This man was called Francesco Bartoli. We owe to his pen a valuable collection of biographical notes on Italian actors and actresses: *Notizie Istoriche dei Comici Italiani che fiorirono intorno al MDL fino ai giorni presenti* (Padova, Conzatti, 1781). This work contains a life of Teodora Ricci and the author's own autobiography. After the events of 1777 he separated from his wife, and only acknowledged the first of her three children. Critics may pause to wonder, at this point, whether Gozzi's relations to Mme. Ricci were as Platonic as he painted them. In 1782 Bartoli retired from the stage and lived at Rovigo. On Teodora's leaving the profession in 1793, he took her back, and endured her hysterical tempers until the date of his own death in 1806. She died mad about the year 1824 in the asylum of S. Servilio at Venice.

to be met. I represented the case to Sacchi, who agreed to add a sum of 130 ducats annually, remarking, however, that each year Teodora would be sure to clamour for a further rise in wages. He was right. In proportion as she grew more necessary to the company, she augmented her threats of leaving it and her demands for better appointments.

On the days when she was not on duty at the theatre, I used to accompany her openly to the opera and playhouses and other places of diversion. She had her cover laid at my house, and she frequently dined there in company with her husband, whom I liked for his modest and civil manners. I also managed to introduce her into society. Many of the noble or wealthy families of Venice took pleasure in receiving members of Sacchi's troupe at their houses. At first Teodora Ricci was excluded from such invitations, so cruelly had her character been blackened by female jealousy and malice. I made myself responsible for her good behaviour, and removed the prejudices which placed her at this disadvantage. Under my protection, she went to fashionable dinner-parties and polite assemblies; I also introduced both men and women of good manners to her at her own home. Acting with reckless or stupid good faith, I did not foresee how soon the hidden mines of her perverted inclinations and bad early training would explode and cover me with confusion.

Meanwhile her condition improved in other ways.

She exchanged the dark, ill-smelling apartment she first occupied for a small but convenient abode. Perhaps I ought to touch upon those material services which she may have from time to time received from me; but if she can forget them, it is easier for me to do so also. I must add that, while I was never blindly enamoured of her, I never found her grasping or rapacious.

The time arrived when my friends the actors were about to leave Venice for the theatres of Bergamo and Milan. Before parting from Teodora, I begged her to remember that she had to some extent my honour in her keeping. She was going into danger, among a crowd of envious persons who would enjoy nothing better than to see her compromise herself and me by levity of conduct. She replied that her wishes and intentions were so firmly bent on abiding by my counsels, that she should like to ratify our alliance by a bond of religion. Would I hold her expected infant at the font? I said that I should be very willing to do so, but that I could not promise to leave Venice to be present at the christening. To this I added jestingly: "Your request is somewhat despotic in the condition it imposes on me. You are thinking more of your own interests than of my affections, which may perchance have been engaged for you. This bond of religion puts an insuperable barrier to my desires." We laughed the matter over, and agreed upon it amicably.

She begged for letters of recommendation to Bergamo and Milan. Knowing how worse than useless such introductions are, I confined myself to one testimonial, addressed to my good friend Signor Stefano Sciugliaga, Secretary of the University at Milan, and to his wife, an estimable couple, full of kindness and distinguished by their virtues. Furnished with this letter, the Ricci left me, and I felt the loss of her at Venice. She went to Bergamo, where she gave birth to a little girl, for whom Sacchi stood my proxy at the font. I discharged the usual duties to the Church, and did what was proper in the circumstances by the mother of my godchild. Teodora pursued her journey to Milan, whence she wrote me a full account of the kindness and courtesy she received from Signor Stefano Sciugliaga and his wife Lucia.

The weariness I feel in writing this chapter makes me measure what my readers must experience in reading it. I therefore cut it short and finish it.

L.

Fresh passages regarding my foolish but persevering friendship for Mme. Ricci.—Highly comical discoveries which involved me further in the line I had adopted.

Sacchi's troupe had just finished their season at Milan, when I received a letter from my friend Sciu-

gliaga, informing me that my new gossip's husband was seriously ill. A celebrated physician of that city declared him to be in the last stage of consumption. This being the case, the interests of his wife and two young children imperatively demanded a separation. Sacchi had returned before the rest of the company, and I immediately communicated the news to him. We settled that it would be best to induce the Ricci's husband to leave Venice for his native air of Bologna, offering him three francs a day for his expenses there, until his health should be sufficiently restored for him to resume his duties. My friend's mother, Emilia Ricci, happened to be in Venice at the time; and I thought that the delicate charge of making this communication to the poor fellow might be intrusted to her. I found her very well disposed to undertake it.

When Signora Ricci arrived, I went to visit her, and was received with all her usual demonstrations of cordiality. She looked extremely thin and pale and downcast. On my asking after her health, she replied with a gesture of despair, and, as though she was afraid of being overheard: "I am at my wits' end; my husband goes on spitting blood. Yet I must sleep with him; I am living in hourly dread for myself and my poor children." I did my best to calm her by describing the plan on which Sacchi and her mother had agreed with me. But days flew by, and her mother, why I know not, never made

the necessary communication. Meanwhile the man grew worse, and the poor young wife had at last to take this disagreeable duty on herself. She discharged it with a judgment and a feeling which raised her in my esteem. Her husband took the announcement in a Christian spirit, and set off for Bologna, committing his wife and family to me with streaming eyes. I may incidentally remark that the Milanese physician had mistaken his case. Rest among his relatives restored him to a better state of health, and after some months he was able to return to Venice and resume work at the theatre. But the separation between him and his wife continued from this time forward.

The absence of her husband altered my relations to Signora Ricci, and made her position very delicate. I told her frankly that it would be more prudent if I discontinued my daily visits to her house. We should have plenty of opportunities for meeting in the green-room of the theatre. To this she replied: "So, then! In the midst of my enemies, without a husband, on the eve of being made a widow, with two children, I am to be left alone, abandoned by my friends!" Pale, thin, and out of health, she spoke these words with such an accent of intense sorrow that my resolution was shaken. I promised to alter nothing in my conduct with regard to her, only stipulating that she, on her side, should be careful not to compromise us both by any im-

prudence of behaviour. How ill-judged this yielding to compassion and inclination was, will appear too plainly in the sequel.

She was fairly well off, enjoying a salary of 530 ducats, while her husband lived at Bologna at the charges of the company. In fact, her position, compared with that of other leading actresses, was decidedly good; yet she continued to complain and haggle for an increase of wages. I did all in my power to interest the other members of the troupe in her behalf, and brought Sacchi to her house. In this way an intimacy sprang up between her and the director of the company which led in a short while to his augmenting her appointments by more than a hundred ducats. He told his partners that this addition was made in order that she might improve her stage wardrobe. I always laugh when I remember that excuse for generosity. My readers will soon know why.

The Ricci, left without her husband, stood in need of some domestic counsellor and friend, who would assist her not only in Venice, but during the six months of her theatrical tours. She chose for this purpose a young Bolognese actor called Coralli, of more education than his comrades, but somewhat of a humbug. I liked the fellow for his polished manners and dramatic talent, and saw no reason to resent this intimacy. Nor did I object to the male visitors whom I met at her house. They were

actors, men of business, letter-carriers from Florence, Bologna, and Modena, and persons of the same sort. But I warned her frequently and seriously against admitting men of the town and pleasure, who would certainly compromise her reputation and bring discredit on my friendship. I could see that she rebelled in secret against the severity of my principles. I repeated that, if she broke into revolt, I should immediately carry out my threat of leaving her to her fate. In taking this line, I confess that I acted very foolishly. I could not change her nature or substitute sound views of life for the corrupt traditions of her calling. She imagined that I was nothing more than a jealous lover, and only sought my society for the protection it afforded her, and for the benefits I was able to confer upon her by my writings. She also hoped to make me a screen for carrying on intrigues in accordance with her vitiated principles. I ought indeed to have withdrawn from her at this point. But my good-nature and the task I had undertaken of pushing her in the profession kept me at her side.

Very soon new motives for taking the decisive step of a rupture with Signora Ricci appeared. Sacchi, whom I had introduced to her house, was seized with a blind and brutal passion for the young woman. Who would have imagined that an old fellow of eighty, gouty, with swollen legs and frozen veins, could have been inflamed by such desires? Sometimes, when I

happened to pay visits at unwonted hours, I saw him running as fast as he could to hide himself from my sight. I pretended not to notice this, but I felt sure that a conspiracy of some sort was being hatched between them.

One morning I found my gossip engaged in unrolling a piece of white satin, some thirty ells in length. She hung lost in admiration over the beautiful stuff. "So," said I, "you have been making purchases?" "Yes," she answered, "I wanted a new gown of white satin, and have been to buy it." "You are always complaining that your salary is insufficient, but I am glad to see that you can afford yourself this indulgence." "Sacchi was with me this morning; he gave the merchant security; I have got the stuff on credit, and three sequins a month are to be deducted from my salary to pay for it." Now I have said that Teodora Ricci could not tell a lie without betraying some confusion. I noticed a blush overspread her face, and quietly resumed the conversation: "Well, you have not behaved well by me. I know how punctual you are in paying debts, and have before now given the same security for you on more than one occasion. Why did you resort to Sacchi for this little service? You are not dealing frankly with me." She blushed still deeper, and exclaimed with irritation: "I suppose I must tell you the truth! That old man is madly in love with me. He wants to give me the dress, and expects from

me what he will never get." I saw at a glance why the *capocomico* had been hiding from me, and began to address the following remarks to the young actress: "Dear gossip, it is impossible that an old man of eighty can have gone so far without encouragement from you. I have often noticed that he ran away and hid himself on my approach. What reason had he for doing this? You are sowing the seeds of dissension between me and an associate of more than twenty years standing. You are painting me in false colours to that man; and this is your return for a thousand kindnesses. I have stood by you in your profession, and declared myself the champion of your honour. Now, for a satin gown, you are going to destroy the work of years. That white dress upon your shoulders will be the filthiest, the most besmirched, the most shameful of your wardrobe. It will be a robe of infamy, and work your ruin. Pray reflect that old Sacchi has a viper for his wife, with two daughters, who hate and vilify and slander you. Do you imagine that you will conceal your intrigues from their curious eyes? No indeed. They will assail you with their tongues, and having caught you in so vile an act, will spare nothing to cast the truth in your teeth, as previously they spread abroad their lies behind your back. I am speaking far more for you than for myself. I can always save my honour by quitting you without an open scandal. I know quite well that you fancy I am in love with you and jealous

of your decrepit adorer. That is not the case. I am only jealous for your honour and for mine. I shall certainly do what I have often threatened, and shall do it without breaking my heart, although 'tis true I have a warm affection for you. What right have I to lay the law down and to preach to you? None. But you have no right to imagine that a man like me, your gossip and your friend, will play the part of screen to your disgraceful traffic. My remedy is to leave you absolute mistress of yourself by withdrawing from your intimacy."

This tirade, which might have been effective in some comedy, but which was too full of delicate sentiment for a comedian, made my actress bend her brows to earth, repeating over and over again: "What a mess I have made of it!" "Yes," I replied, "you will soon find what a nasty mess it is!" And so I rose to take my leave. "Sir, dear friend and gossip," she began again, detaining me with tears which fell from her eyelids—tears more probably of rage than of repentance—"I swear that I did not mean to act amiss. Gladly will I throw that satin out of window. Oh, wretched trade of us poor actresses! We have always devils round us, to torment and work upon our weakness. The old man promised me plate, jewels, splendid toilette-tables. He turned my brains and dulled my senses." "Very well," I answered. "I do not want to prevent you from buying wealth at the price of infamy, and

of the libels which attend it. But I do not mean to serve as screen, to be the friend and consort of a woman of your sort." "I am quite prepared," she added, "to return the satin; and you may be sure that I left Sacchi under the impression that I should pay for it out of my salary. By all that I hold sacred, I swear to you that I have never given, and shall never give, that old seducer what he asks for. I come to you for advice now, and you shall see that I will follow it to the very letter."

I told her that she was asking for advice too late in the day to be of any use. "Sacchi is spiteful, vicious, brutal, corrupt in his opinions upon human nature, and—a player. What is worse, he is in love. He does not believe you capable of giving up this satin or of paying for it. He will scent the truth that I have been at work here, because he knows my principles of conduct. Shame, rage, and spite will make a demon of the man. He will conceive a violent hatred against me, which he will vent upon you, his interest being to keep on good terms with myself. I am truly sorry for you. You do not know the lengths to which the infernal nature of the animal will carry him. Yet I cannot recommend any other course but that which your own sense of duty will dictate to you."

A few days after this scene, she told me with a beaming countenance that she had announced to Sacchi her firm intention of paying for the satin out

of her appointments. "I wholly approve of the step which you have taken," said I in answer, "but I beg you to tell me without reserve how he took your declaration." "To speak the candid truth," she replied, "he looked at me askance, then turned surly, and muttered, 'Yes, yes! I see who gave you the advice. Well, well, you shall pay for the gown!'" "My poor girl," I added, "prepare yourself to pay dearly for the satin, both with money and with tears. May this be a lesson to you not to coax presents out of brutal libertines."

The fact was that from this moment forward she became the butt of that bad old man's persecutions. From the height of his position as director of the troupe, he launched taunt after taunt against her, subjected her to the grossest sarcasms, and did not spare them even in my presence. If she had to act upon the stage with him, he employed his popularity with the audience and his ability as actor to turn her into ridicule with scurvy jests and sallies. Nay, more: in one of the rooms behind the theatre, where some eight actors and actresses were assembled, the brute, before my face, insulted her by implying that he had been admitted to her last familiarities. I saw her turn pale and on the point of fainting.

I was absolutely certain that Sacchi's innuendoes had no grain of truth in them. He only wished to compromise her in my eyes, in order that I might abandon her to his desires and vengeance. This stung

me to espouse her cause, although I knew that prudence pointed in the contrary direction. Next day I found her drowned in tears. I told her that the moment had not come for me to leave her. "Sacchi has insulted me as well as you, forgetful of the benefits which I have heaped upon him. It is now my business to tame the devil in him without open scandal. All I am afraid of is, that you will force me to abandon you by future follies of a like description. As far as the present case is concerned, you may trust to my fidelity."

I had just given a new piece to the company, and went to assist at its first reading in the green-room. Sacchi shot his usual arrows at Signora Ricci, and alluded to her love-affairs with Coralli. Perhaps he meant to rouse my jealousy without reflecting that this liaison had in my eyes nothing dishonourable. Coralli was a poor actor, and Teodora ran no risk of passing for a venal beauty in his company. I contented myself by showing the disgust I felt for the old man's insinuations by my manner, without condescending to utter a word. Knowing well that it is only possible to wound comedians in the sensitive point of their pecuniary interest, I laid my plans accordingly. I cut short my visits to Signora Ricci, avoided the green-room of the theatre, and did not put in an appearance at the next rehearsal of my piece. The actors began to whisper. Some of them inquired whether I was ill. "I am perfectly well," I

SACCHI AND SIGNORA RICCI

Original Etching by Ad. Lalauze

answered, "but it seems to me that I am superfluous at your rehearsals. Besides, I have private business." Next evening I kept away from the theatre, and next day I avoided the rehearsal. The agitation among the actors grew to a tumult. When the Ricci was asked about me, she replied with perfect truth that she had not seen me. The uproar increased, while I amused myself with thinking how my machinations were succeeding.

On the fourth morning, an actor, called Luigi Benedetti, a Roman, and Sacchi's nephew, waited on me. He was in great distress, and wet to the skin with a heavy shower which happened to be falling. He opened the conversation by expressing the regrets of all the troupe at my unaccountable desertion of them. I said nothing about the real point in question, but replied with cheerful dignity to this effect: "Sacchi does not care for my attendance or assistance. I am not a hired poet, nor yet a man of plaster. If your uncle comes to rehearsal, he spends the time in insulting Signora Ricci before my face and before the whole company. He committed this lady to my charge, and begged me to make her useful to the troupe. I have done my duty; she has become a valuable actress. I am godchild to one of her children and her friend, and do not choose to be exposed to rudeness on her account. Therefore I take it that the best course for me will be to withdraw from the society of Sig-

nora Ricci and the rest of you. I shall not harbour hostile feelings against any one ; but I cannot stay to be made uncomfortable in return for the many kindnesses I have conferred upon your company." On hearing this speech, Benedetti was really vexed, or at any rate he acted extreme annoyance. Admitting that his uncle was a man of eccentric, inconsiderate, and nasty temper, he tried to convince me that certain vexations connected with a married daughter had quite upset him during the last few days. He did not know, indeed, what he was doing. Then the young actor proceeded to sing my praises, protesting that I should be the ruin of the troupe if I deserted them, and assailing me with passionate entreaties. I smiled, and promised to attend the rehearsal of my piece next morning, and to be guided by what I found at the theatre. I went accordingly, and met with nothing but politeness, contented faces, harmony. Matters stood thus until the end of the Carnival, when the company left Venice for its customary six months' tour, and I stayed behind to reflect upon the perilous qualities of Teodora Ricci.

LI.

Reflections made in vain; flattering expectations dissolved into what deserves neither flattery nor reflection.—The troubles to which a man is exposed who takes a company of comedians and an actress under his protection.

The upshot of my meditations upon the events related in the preceding chapters was as follows. One day or another, this woman, with her explosive character and egregious vanity, will expose me to some public scandal. She cannot rest contented with the gains of her profession, and is sure to add to them by baser means. She only cares for me because I am useful to her at the theatre, and convenient as a cloak for her intrigues. All my arguments and warnings are wasted. It is useless to try to make a Lucretia or a Pamela out of an actress who will never be more than Teodora Ricci.

Meanwhile, she went on writing to me by nearly every post, expressing much affection for myself, and indulging in the usual lamentations over her miserable earnings. One morning brought a letter in which she informed me that she had just signed an engagement with a certain Signor Francesco Zan-

nuzzi.[1] He wanted to take her to Paris as *prima donna* in the Italian theatre which he directed there. Her salary was to be 3000 francs a year. I was glad to get this news; for if things stood as she declared, I should be freed from all my obligations, and separated by several hundred leagues from her.

All the same, I replied in writing that she must remember her engagement to Sacchi. It would be only right and proper to give him sufficient notice of her intentions, in order that he might provide himself with another leading actress. I added that the appointments offered by Zannuzzi would hardly suffice for her expenses in a capital like Paris. Also, I did not think her specially well qualified to appear with success before a French audience; and her total ignorance of the language seemed to me a grave objection. Nevertheless, she was quite free to do as she thought best.

While thus indulging myself in the hope that she might actually leave Italy, I was surprised by a visit from Signor Zannuzzi. He was known to me, and was a man of excellent breeding. After exchanging compliments, he began to say that his company had sent him on a voyage of discovery through Italy to

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[1] Zannuzzi was *premier amoureux* at the Comédie Italienne in Paris. It was he who invited Goldoni to visit that city, and offered him an engagement for two years from the Court. See Goldoni's *Memoirs*, part ii. chap. xliii.

find a *prima donna* for their theatre at Paris. "I heard of this," I answered, "and, like an intelligent man, you have selected Teodora Ricci." "By no means," he put in; "it is true that I have seen her and held some general conversation on the subject with her. But she is deficient in several points of great importance for our theatre. The actress who seems most suitable is Elisabetta Vinacesi, with whom I have spoken, and from whom I expect a decisive answer." "What the devil," said I to myself, "has Teodora been up to, lying in this way to her friend and gossip?" Nevertheless, I did my utmost to persuade Zannuzzi that there was no comparison between the two actresses; he ought certainly to choose Signora Ricci. My diplomacy was thrown away. Later on, I heard that Vinacesi preferred remaining in Italy to exposing herself to the bustle and irregularities of a professional career at Paris. Also I was informed that Zannuzzi had tried to engage other actresses, without reopening negotiations with the Ricci. Thus my hope of being liberated from what I felt to be a perilous situation vanished into air.

October arrived, when the acting companies return to Venice for the winter. I found Signora Ricci in good health, and related to her with displeasure what Zannuzzi had communicated to me about her proposed engagement. She replied, not without heat, that he was on his way to Paris in order to

report to his associates. She expected letters from him confirming what had passed between them in their interviews. Then she launched forth into her usual invectives against Sacchi's troupe, and vowed she would not serve for such pitiful appointments any longer. I tried in vain to convince her that she was singularly well off compared with other actresses, and considering the circumstances of the profession in Italy. In reply to all I said she only went on beating the same old gong. It was clear that her head had been turned upon her summer tour by flatterers and so-called philosophical admirers of the modern school.

Two days after the arrival of the company, Coralli came to see me, and made the following confidences. "Sacchi," said he, "is dying of love for Teodora Ricci. I do not conceal my affection for the young woman; I frequent her house, attend her in public, and make myself as useful as I can to her. He is brutally jealous of me, and I have had to put up with a thousand outrages and insults. Finally, he has forbidden me to visit at her house, alleging that if Count Gozzi came to remark our intimacy, he would retire from the company in disgust." I burst into a fit of laughter worthy of Margutte.[1] "What sort of people have I got myself mixed up with?" said I to myself; "for whom am I wasting pen, ink, paper

[1] The Greek rogue in Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore.*

and brains? Does Sacchi, who has received a thousand benefits at my hands, expect to make me a stalking-horse in his drivelling amours?" Recovering my gravity as well as I could, I informed Coralli that, so far as I was concerned, he might cultivate Signora Ricci's intimacy without scruple. If she played the part of a mercenary beauty with libertines of fashion, I could not remain her friend. But he was not one of those persons who could compromise my reputation. Only, I added, that I feared for him; "Sacchi is revengeful, and will use his powerful arms against you." Coralli, enlightened as to my way of thinking, returned a thousand thanks and took his leave. Next day I went to visit Teodora, and found Coralli there. I made a point of dining with them, and inviting them both to dinner at my house. By thus acting, I taught Sacchi how little chance there was of frightening Coralli by alleging my jealousy. Baffled in his plans, he took the opportunity of Christmas, when managers of theatres make changes in their troupes, to give Coralli warning.

Coralli came at once to report what had befallen him, and to beg for my intervention in his favour, while Teodora showed herself extremely annoyed by his expulsion. Nothing meanwhile was heard among the actors but virtuous remarks upon the scandalous connection which Sacchi had so firmly put an end to. I tried to make the director see reason, and not to expel a member of his troupe who

was certainly a very useful actor. All I could extort was a promise to keep Coralli, if some other player happened to retire. Yet I knew that, after I had once expressed a wish that he should stay, Sacchi would have managed this to gratify me. In fact, the man was only forced to leave at last because of his own knavish trickery. After learning from me what Sacchi had conceded, he persuaded a good and simple fellow of his own city, Domenico Barsanti, that the manager meant to give him, Barsanti, warning, and that he had better, for his own repute, anticipate this misfortune by sending in his resignation. When Barsanti proceeded to do so, Sacchi wormed the secret out of him, and answered: "I had no intention of dismissing you. Go to Conte Gozzi, tell him the whole story, and beg for his protection. That will teach him what sort of fellow Coralli is." Barsanti accordingly arrived, and stupefied me with the recital of this piece of swindling ingenuity. I need not add that Coralli disappeared at the end of the Carnival. I got a letter from him full of remorse, especially for having hurt me by his stratagem for staying in the company.

I went on as usual with Signora Ricci, and had nothing particular to notice in her conduct. Only I observed that gondoliers used often to come behind the scenes with messages from ladies who desired her company in the boxes. That they were not ladies, but a very different sort of persons, I discovered

in course of time. Again, she chose at this epoch to change her dwelling from a house in the neighbourhood of the theatre, which opened on a frequented street, to another at some distance, far more expensive, and which had the disadvantage of standing in a little lonely alley. This step exposed her to a renewal of the worst reports about her private character and conduct. It also severely taxed her purse for the expenses of removal and installation.

When she left Venice at the end of the Carnival, she placed her little girl, my godchild, out at nurse. I used frequently to go and see this excellent little creature in her mother's absence. For the rest, our correspondence by letters continued much on the same footing as before.

LII.

Fresh benefits conferred upon the playing company protected by me.—Fresh advantages won by me for Mme. Ricci.—All thrown away as nought.

I feel that this long story of my liaison with an actress cannot fail to be tedious. Yet I am obliged to continue it in detail, inasmuch as events to which the public attached considerable importance, and which exposed me to criticism, can only be under-

stood in their right light by reference to this piece of private history.[1]

It may be demurred that I ought to have withdrawn from Sacchi's troupe when I detected the evil spirits which were making mischief there. To this I reply that I had found recreation and amusement in their society for many years, that I enjoyed the opportunity of seeing my plays acted by such clever artists, and also that my temper inclines me to endure many inconveniences rather than break old habits. For example, I have always borne with vicious inattentive servants, tailors who cheated me and spoiled my clothes, shoemakers who tortured my feet with their ill-fitting handiwork, barbers who flayed my chin with their razors, hairdressers who snipped my ears with their scissors, and other tiresome folk of the same sort, to whom I never administered a sharp rebuke, but only such jesting expostulations as made them laugh.

When October brought the actors back to Venice, Sacchi was disagreeably surprised by a piece of news which threatened him with ruin. Before the theatres open for the season, they are examined by official architects, who report upon their substantiality and safety. The theatre of S. Salvatore was condemned this year by the experts, and an order from the Government prohibited its being used. Signor Ven-

[1] Gozzi here refers directly to the Gratarol episode.

dramini and the players were in despair. Thirty and more persons, who gained their bread by acting, saw themselves thrown out of work. Steps were immediately taken to put the house in repair, and render it fit for the reception of the public. During two-and-twenty days, while this work was going on, the company took not a penny. Yet Sacchi continued to pay his hired actors at their stipulated rates. This seemed to me generous on his part, and I tried to persuade Teodora Ricci that she ought to be grateful. She took no notice of my arguments, but kept on repeating her old complaints about her salary. Her husband, who had come back, but no longer occupied the same room as his wife, saw the matter in its proper light.

Meanwhile the rival theatres triumphed over our discomfiture. At S. Gio. Grisostomo a new Truffaldino appeared, whom the fickle Venetians dubbed a better Zanni than their old friend Sacchi. Satirical sonnets began to circulate against my protegés, and they replied with pasquinades. This wordy warfare filled the town with dirty libels. I begged Sacchi's associates to keep their temper and be silent, trusting to my power of restoring their prestige by a new piece I was at work on. This was entitled *Il Moro di Corpo Bianco, ossia lo Schiavo del Proprio Onore*.[1]

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[1] Printed in vol. ix. of the *Opere*, ed. cit.

At last the repairs were finished, and received the surveyor's approval. An official edict appeared to the effect that the theatre Vendramini at S. Salvatore would be safe for the autumn and ensuing Carnival. This limited announcement did not restore the confidence of the public, who still feared that the house might tumble about their ears. Accordingly, the first ten or twelve nights saw a desert in our theatre. The Venetians had two other houses for plays and three for operas open; and they persisted in regarding S. Salvatore as a trap for the destruction of the human race.

While things were dragging on in this way, I got my drama finished. We read it aloud to the whole company at a dinner given in the Wild Man Inn.[1] The enthusiastic applause of the actors made me feel sure of its success. I made them a present of it, and the piece was mounted with the least possible delay. The playbills drew a large audience. Everybody was burning to know what the deuce a Moor with a white body could possibly be; this taught me that the prospect of a new excitement will drive the fear of death out of the heads of my Venetians. During a run of eighteen successive nights, all the other theatres were drained of their spectators, and the opera-houses cursed my *Moro di Corpo Bianco*. The reputation of S. Salvatore was fully re-established,

[1] *Il Salvatico*, one of the very oldest hostelries of Venice, dating from the Middle Ages.

and we heard nothing more about the fabric being a rat-trap to catch human beings.

Teodora Ricci had scored a great success by her brilliant acting. Intoxicated with popular plaudits, she began to grumble, and threatened to break her engagement unless her salary were raised. Under these circumstances, Sacchi came to me one day and begged me to draw up articles between the actress and the troupe, by which she should commit herself to five years of fixed service. He left the settlement of her appointments to me, but stipulated that a fine of 500 ducats should be exacted from whichever of the contracting parties broke the bond. I undertook this negotiation with some reluctance, and concluded it, to my own satisfaction, in the following way. Signora Ricci and her husband were to receive 850 ducats a year, they engaging to serve the company five years, under the above-mentioned penalty of 500 ducats if they cancelled the agreement. The articles were drawn up in writing and signed by Ricci and her husband. I fancied I had done what was right and equitable for both parties, and took the articles with some pride to Sacchi. That brutal old fellow thanked me in the way I shall relate. Putting his spectacles upon his nose, he began to read the document; and when I wished to explain it, he burst into a torrent of oaths, banging the table with his fists as though I had just attempted a surgical operation upon his tenderest parts. I remarked that, if

he did not approve of the conditions, he might tear the paper up: it was all the same to me. This line he did not take; but set his signature to the document, grumbling all the while that neither fines nor penalties would bind that woman to her word, and that he reckoned upon my influence to keep her in the straight path. Then I took the contract back to the Signora, who murmured some words between her teeth about the hard condition of her five years' service.

The imposthume, which had so long been forming, was bound to come to a head at last and burst. It is now my business to relate what made the final rupture between me and Teodora Ricci unavoidable.

The actors left Venice for their summer tour, and many letters passed between her and me, which showed that she was still aggrieved with Sacchi, and more than ever puffed up with the flatteries of lovers. I read and pondered her correspondence, and came to the conclusion that before a year was out we must cease to be friends.

When she returned in the autumn, on the occasion of my first visit, she expressed some surprise at the alteration of my manner. It so happened that at this very moment her servant Pavola handed her a letter which had just arrived from Turin. She flared up, and flung herself about, manifesting a strong desire to be able to strike the woman dead for bringing the letter in my presence. "What

has the poor girl done amiss?" I asked. "Do not wrong me by supposing that I am inquisitive about your correspondence. If one of the lovers, whom you actresses always leave behind you, has written you a *billet-doux*, I have no right to interfere in such concerns of wholly private interest." "This is no affair of lovers," she replied with heat, opening and casting her eyes over the pages. When she had read the letter, she hesitated a little, and then handed it to me. "I do not want to hide anything from you; read it, and you will see that it has nothing to do with love." I replied that I did not care to read it, being sure from her behaviour to the servant that it contained some secret which she wished to conceal from me. "Well, then," she said, "I must inform you that I made the acquaintance at Turin of a lady called Mme. Rossetti, whose husband lives at Paris. This lady expressed her regret at my being obliged to drag my life out among wretched Italian comedians. She encouraged me to act with spirit in my own interest, and gave me hopes of entering the theatre at Paris through her husband's assistance. The writer of this letter in my hand is a certain Abbé of Turin, who negotiates the matter, and is a very able diplomatist. He informs me that the affair is on the point of being settled to my wishes."

I pointed out that, if she intended to accept an engagement at Paris, it was her duty to inform Sacchi, and to pay the penalty of 500 ducats. "No,"

she replied, "that is precisely what I want to avoid doing." "So then," I retorted, "you mean to transact your business secretly, and to swindle the poor actors to whom you are engaged here! Be open, tell Sacchi the truth, and I will engage to manage matters so that you shall not have to pay the fine." "Sacchi," she rejoined, "must know nothing about the transaction. If he gets wind of these negotiations, he will engage another leading actress; and should my treaty fail, I shall be dismissed and thrown upon the street. What an excellent friend and gossip you are, forsooth, at a pinch like this! We actors and actresses are not accustomed to such niceties and scruples." I told her that she ought to rely on me for carrying her through any difficulties, and that I could only recommend fair dealing in the matter. "However," I added, "if you prefer to take the tortuous path and work by intrigue, I promise to keep the secret which you have disclosed."

Having passed my word, I let her do what she liked in this affair, and asked no further questions. But I was more than ever resolved to withdraw as prudently and quietly as possible from the complicated position in which I found myself placed. I wished to avoid open scandal; but I little reckoned on the people I had to deal with. You cannot disengage yourself so easily from actors.

LIII.

Candid details regarding the composition and production of my notorious comedy entitled "Le Droghe d'Amore."—More too about the Ricci, and her relations to Signor P. A. Gratarol.

Just about this time I had planned and partly executed a new comedy, which afterwards obtained a *succès de scandale* under the title of *Le Droghe d'Amore*.[1] The dust stirred up by this innocent piece in three acts obliges me to enter at some length into the circumstances which attended its composition and production.

Everybody is aware that, after the long series of my allegorical fables had run their course upon the stage, I thought fit to change my manner, and adapted several Spanish dramas for our theatre. Sacchi used to bring me bundles of Spanish plays. I turned them over, and selected those which seemed to me best fitted for my purpose. Taking the bare skeleton and ground-plot of these pieces, I worked them up with new characters, fresh dialogue, and an improved conduct of the action, to suit the requirements of the Italian theatre. A whole array of dramas—the *Donna*

[1] Printed at the end of the third volume of the unique edition of the *Memorie Inutili di Carlo Gozzi*, 1797.

Innamorata, the *Donna Vendicativa*, the *Donna Elvira*, the *Notti Affannose*, the *Fratelli Nimici*, the *Principessa Filosofa*, the *Pubblico Segreto*, the *Moro di Corpo Bianco*, the *Metafisico*, and the *Bianca di Melfi*, all of which issued from my pen, attest the truth of these remarks.[1] I need say no more about them, because the prefaces with which I sent them to the press have sufficiently informed the public.

In pursuance of this plan, then, I had been working up Tirso da Molina's piece, entitled *Zelos cum Zelos se Curat*, into my own *Droghe d'Amore*. I was but little satisfied, made tardy progress, and had even laid aside the manuscript as worthless—condemning it, like scores of other abortive pieces, to the waste-paper basket. It so happened that after Christmas in this year, 1775, I was laid up with a tedious attack of rheumatism, which threatened to pass over into putrid fever, and which confined me to the house for more than thirty days. Signora Ricci kept up amicable relations with me during this illness; and even after Carnival began, she and her husband used to spend their spare evenings at my house. The society which cheered me through my lingering convalescence included the patrician Paolo Balbi, Doctor Andrea Comparetti, Signor Raffaelle Todeschini, my nephew Francesco, son of

[1] These will be found in Gozzi's *Opere*, ed. cit. The prefaces are printed before the plays.

Gasparo, Signor Carlo Maffeo, Signor Michele Molinari, and an occasional actor from Sacchi's troupe. Wanting occupation for my hours of solitude, I took up the *Droghe d'Amore*, and went on working at it; always against the grain, however, for the piece seemed to me to drag and to want life. There is so much improbability in the plots of Spanish dramas that all the arts of rhetoric and eloquence have to be employed in order to convey an appearance of reality to the action. This tends to prolixity, and I felt that my unfinished piece was particularly faulty in that respect. It was divided into three acts, and I had brought the dialogue down to the middle of the third. Little as I liked it, the fancy took me to see what impression it would make upon an audience. Accordingly, I read it aloud one evening to Teodora Ricci, my nephew, Doctor Comparetti, and Signor Molinari. They were interested beyond my expectation, and loudly opposed my intention of laying it aside. The *prima donna*, in particular, urged me in the strongest terms to finish what remained of it to do. The gentlemen I have just named can bear witness to the sincerity of my coldness for this play, which afterwards, by a succession of accidents, came to be regarded as a deliberate satire on a single individual.

Some days after the reading, Signora Ricci asked me casually if I was acquainted with Signor Piero Antonio Gratarol, secretary to the Senate. I answered

that I did not know him, which was the simple truth. I added, however, that he had been pointed out to me on the piazza, and that his outlandish air, gait, and costume struck me as very different from what one would expect in a secretary to the grave Venetian Senate. "Yet I have heard him spoken of as a man of ability and intelligence." "He has a great respect for you," said she. "I am obliged to him for his good opinion," I replied. "I think him a man of breeding," she went on, "and I also think him a man of honour." "So far as I am concerned," I answered, "I know nothing to the contrary, unless it be his unfortunate notoriety for what is now called gallantry." There was no malice in thus alluding to what was universally talked about, and had even come before the judges of the State. I only intended to give a hint to my gossip, which I soon discovered to be too late for any service. Having spoken, I immediately sought to soften what I said by adding: "I do not deny that externals may expose a man to false opinion in such matters; and not being familiar with Signor Gratarol, I neither affirm nor deny what is commonly voiced abroad about him." "He is elected ambassador to Naples," she continued, "and I am anxious to appear upon a theatre in that capital. He may be of the utmost service to me." "Why," said I, "are not you thinking of going to Paris?" "I must try," she replied, "to make my fortune where and how I can." "Do as you like,"

I answered, and turned the conversation upon other topics.

It was clear to my mind that, during my long illness, the Ricci had struck up a friendship with this Signor Gratarol, and that she was beating about the bush to bring us together at her house. She had not forgotten my determination to cut short my daily visits if she received attentions from a man of fashion and pleasure. I, for my part, should have been delighted to meet Signor Gratarol anywhere but in the dwelling of the actress I had protected and publicly acknowledged for the last five years.

It now became my fixed resolve to procrastinate until the end of the Carnival, avoiding the scandal which would ensue from a sudden abandonment of Teodora Ricci. But when she left Venice for the spring and summer tour, I determined to drop our correspondence by letter, and to meet her afterwards upon the footing of distant civility. Events proved how useless it was to form any such plans with reference to a woman of her character.

Wearying at length of my long imprisonment, I ventured abroad against my doctor's advice, and found myself much the better for a moderate amount of exercise.[1] This encouraged me to seek my ac-

[1] From this point forward Gozzi relates the series of events which Gratarol had already described in his *Narrazione Apologetica*. The two accounts agree in essentials, the fundamental difference between them

customed recreation in the small rooms behind the scenes of the theatre. There I was welcomed with loud unanimous delight by all the members of the company. But, much to my surprise, and in spite of Sacchi's usual strictness with regard to visitors, I found Signor Gratarol installed in the green-room. He seemed to be quite at home, flaunting a crimson mantle lined with costly furs, and distributing candied citrons and Neapolitan bonbons[1] right and left. He very politely offered me some of his comfits, as though I had been a pretty girl, on whom such things are well bestowed. I thanked him for the attention, and took good care to utter no remarks upon the novelty of his appearance in that place.

I have already mentioned that Signora Ricci's removal to a lonely quarter of the town had exposed her to much malignant gossip. Her ill-wishers suggested that she was laying herself out for clandestine visits and company which compromised her reputation. I went to see her still, but not every day as formerly, and always at times when I was certain not to meet with Signor Gratarol. He meanwhile continued to be a constant guest behind the scenes of the theatre.

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being Gratarol's firm belief that Gozzi meant to satirise him in the *Droghe d'Amore*, which Gozzi vehemently denies. It must be remembered that Gozzi had the *Narrazione* before him while writing these Memoirs.

[1] *Diavoloni* is the Italian word. We hear of these comfits also from Gratarol. They are big sugar-plums containing liqueur.

In order to cast dust in my eyes, and not to lose the support of my protection, Mme. Ricci took every opportunity of alluding to the good-breeding and excellent behaviour of her new friend. He treated her with the respect due to a queen, she said, and greatly regretted that he was never fortunate enough to find me at her house. I reflected, perhaps unjustly, that Signor Gratarol would indeed have been delighted to meet me there. This would have suited his game; for when the flirtation had advanced to the stage of gallantry, his mistress would still have had her old friend and gossip to rely on. Anyhow, I responded to her suggestions in terms like these: "I am much obliged to the gentleman in question. I believe all you tell me, although nobody else would believe it. You know my principles, and the position I have willingly assumed toward you. I am sorry to see you exposing yourself to fresh calumnies, and to be no longer able to defend you. With Signor Gratarol, much as I differ from him upon certain points, I should be glad to enter into social relations anywhere but under your roof. You must have observed that I treat him with esteem and respect when we come together behind the scenes. It is impossible, however, that he can be ignorant of the open friendship I have professed for you during five whole years. All Venice knows it. I desire nothing more than that he should continue to treat you like a queen, as you say he does. But since I do not seek to oppose

your liberty of action, I trust that you will not be so indiscreet as to impose conditions on my freedom."

What report of this conversation she made to Signor Gratarol is known only to her and him. She was exasperated, and I do not think the picture she drew of me can have been very flattering. Probably I was described as weakly jealous:—jealous, however, I had never been of other admirers, who did not compromise me in my intimacy with this actress.

A few weeks were left of the Carnival, when, entering the small rooms of the theatre one evening, I found Signor Gratarol as usual there. He addressed me courteously: "Count, Sacchi here and Fiorilli and Zannoni have been invited to eat a pheasant with me at my casino at S. Mosè. I hardly venture to invite you also; yet knowing the kindly feeling you have for these persons, and the pleasure you take in their company, if you were disposed to join our party, I should esteem it an honour." The invitation could not have been more politely given; and as the other guests had been named, I saw no reason to refuse. I added, however, that the state of my health prevented me from counting with certainty upon the pleasure he offered; anyhow, my absence would not be a great loss to his party. After a few compliments, the day was fixed.

On the following morning I met Sacchi upon the piazza. His eyes were starting from their sockets, and he told me he was in urgent need of my advice.

What passed between us I will relate in dialogue. Sacchi began :—

"A short time since, I met a gentleman who was dining last night at the house of a patrician, the President of the Supreme Tribunal.[1] He took me aside and said: 'Such and such a nobleman (and you know over what Tribunal he presides) was speaking last night about the theatres; in the course of his remarks he let these words fall :—I do not know how it is that Sacchi, who has the reputation of managing his troupe with strictness, and only allowing a few confidential friends to appear behind the scenes of his theatre, should receive secretaries of the Senate openly and every night in the green-room.—Dear Sacchi,' this gentleman continued, 'do not tell any one that I have reported these words; my only object is to put you on your guard.' You see, sir, that the communication forces me to take some active measures. If I neglect it rashly, I shall find myself in difficulties. I confess that I am puzzled, and come to you for counsel."

"You have chosen an inappropriate adviser in this affair," I answered. "You are the master in your own theatre, and have always been severe upon the point in question. Why did not you civilly put a stop to the irregularity before it assumed so embarrassing an aspect? I was a whole month absent

[1] That is, Council of Ten with the Inquisitori di Stato at its head.

from your stage, owing to my illness. When I returned, I found Signor Gratarol installed, and hail-fellow-well-met with everybody. At any rate, it would not have befitted me to make remarks upon the sort of people you admitted."

"I did not introduce the man," said Sacchi. "I noticed him one evening, and thought his visit might be accidental. When he came again and again, I made inquiries; and the whole troupe assured me with ironical malice that he came in the company of the Ricci, was introduced by her, and only came on her account."

"That makes it still more difficult for me to advise you," I replied. "Yet I think I may tell you that I do not believe Signor Gratarol to be indiscreet. If you inform him privately, or let him know through Mme. Ricci, what has been reported to you, I am certain that he will not show himself behind the scenes again."

"I am aware," rejoined Sacchi, "that my way of talking is brusque, passionate, and awkward. Pray do me the kindness to speak to Ricci."

"Excuse me," said I; "I do not undertake commissions of this kind, and have no wish to be mixed up with what only concerns you."

"Nay, I beseech you to do me this kindness!" exclaimed Sacchi once more. "You need only hint at what I have communicated. I assure you, Count, that if I begin to give that woman a bit of my

mind, I shall not be able to refrain from some gross insults."

"Why do you not speak civilly to Signor Gratarol?"

"To tell you the truth, I have not the courage. He is always polite to me. I am afraid that he will take my remarks for an actor's scheming to expel him from the green-room. He might become my enemy, and Ricci in her rage might do me some injury. You know that in our profession we are forced to keep on good terms with everybody."

"Well," said I, "I see that you want me to put my paw into the fire to draw the chestnut out! Never mind! If the opportunity occurs, I will try to do what you request, and set things straight as cautiously as may be."

In the course of one of my coldly ceremonious visits to Mme. Ricci, I dropped these words before rising to take my leave: "I was forgetting to tell you something, which I do not like to say, but which it would be unfriendly to leave unsaid. Sacchi has mentioned this and this to me, and asked me to give you a hint. You can see Signor Gratarol as much as you like in your own house. I hope that you will arrange matters so as not to incur further odium." "Gratarol does not come behind the scenes for me!" cried she, flaming up; "what does it matter to me whether he comes or stays away? Sacchi can tell him to drop his visits." "I have reported to you a

fact," said I with perfect calm, "at the request of an old acquaintance. Whether you, or Sacchi, or nobody tells Signor Gratarol, is all the same to me." I left her fuming and chafing in a fury.

I perceived that my customary readiness to make myself of use had got me into a scrape. The viperish temper in which the woman was when I left her, made me feel sure that she would bite me behind my back; and what followed confirmed my apprehension. She saw with rage that my friendship for her was expiring. She wanted to hold her new friend fast. Incapable of acknowledging herself in the wrong, blinded by vanity and folly, she persisted in regarding me as the victim of jealousy. After the conversation I have just related, Signor Gratarol did not show himself again behind the scenes. What his feelings were towards me Heaven only knows.

On the evening before the famous banquet, I was in one of the small rooms of the theatre with Sacchi, Mme. Ricci, a sister of hers named Mariana who danced in the ballet, and several other actresses and actors. Sacchi suddenly burst into the following tirade:—"To-morrow," he began, "we are to dine with Signor Gratarol. I thought that the guests were Count Gozzi, myself, Fiorilli, and Zannoni. Now it reaches my ears that certain actresses of my troupe have been invited, and that the sumptuous and splendid festivity is given solely in honour of Mme. Teodora Ricci. It has never been my habit

to act as go-between for the women of my establishment. Deuce take it all—&c., &c.—let him go who likes; I shall not, that is flat." He followed up this flood of eloquence with the foulest invectives.

The Ricci's face burned; she did not know where to look, and fixed her eyes upon the ground. Everybody was staring at her. I confess that I felt sorry to see her pilloried in this way. "Well," said I to myself, "the labour of five years has been cast to the winds by this vain woman's frivolous misconduct. The imbroglio is becoming so serious that I fear I shall not drag on to the end of the Carnival without some tiresome explosion." Meanwhile Sacchi went storming on. I tried to calm him down. "You say you do not want to make enemies, and yet you are ready to affront a gentleman who treats you with politeness. The whole affair may be quite harmless, and I do not see why you should lash yourself into a rage about it. You listen too much to idle or malignant gossip." I succeeded in restoring peace, and Sacchi promised to keep his appointment.

I, for my part, feeling really indisposed, and having a rooted antipathy for banquets, especially when the host is no intimate friend of my own, excused myself next morning on the score of health, and received a letter of profuse compliments and expressions of regret in return.

LIV.

A visit from Signor Gratarol.—Notes of our conversation. —Mutinous murmurs in the playing company.—My weakly kindness toward the Ricci.—Final rupture.

On the morning after Signor Gratarol's superb banquet, I was still in bed when my servant announced a visit from that gentleman, whom I had only met before in passing at the theatre. He entered, walking more like an Englishman than a Venetian, elegantly attired, and uttering compliments which my humility forced me to regard as ill-employed cajoleries.

I begged him to excuse me for receiving him in bed. He inquired after my health, and then proceeded to business. A society of gentlefolk, he told me, had been formed, all of whom were amateur actors, and a theatre had been built at San Gregorio for them to play comedies and tragedies. He was a member of this company; and he had suggested to his friends the propriety of electing a permanent chief, with full authority to control and dictate regulations, whose word should be implicitly obeyed. This suggestion having been unanimously accepted, he had taken the liberty to name me as the chief

and manager in question, and my nomination had been received with general approval.

Beside the revolting flattery which underlay this speech, I was positively taken aback to hear a secretary of the august Venetian Senate, an ambassador-elect from the most Serene Republic to the court of a monarch of the Two Sicilies, discussing such a frivolous affair with so much seriousness and making such a fuss about it. I had much ado to maintain my gravity, and could not speak for a few seconds. He came to my relief by resuming his discourse. "Such an institution," he went on, "will be extremely useful in Venice for developing and training the abilities of young men, for giving them, in short, a liberal culture. In my opinion it is admirable, of the greatest utility, and worthy of respect. What do you think, Count?"

I replied that I was far from disapproving of the well-established custom in schools and seminaries of making boys and young men act; and I thought that the same custom in families had many advantages. Besides sharpening and suppling the mental faculties of young people, and improving their elocution, it kept them to some extent aloof from those low sensual pleasures which were deplorably in vogue amongst them. It seemed to me, however, that persons of a mature age, holding offices and posts of public dignity, would do better to extend protection and encouragement to such performances than

to appear themselves upon the stage. Such was my private opinion. But I did not wish to set up for being a critic of my neighbours. For the rest, I thanked him for the honour done me by his amateur society, but begged to decline the office of director. I gave many reasons for not caring to undertake the responsibilities of such a post, and reminded him that my interest in the theatre served only as a distraction from many onerous and painful duties which I had voluntarily undertaken for the benefit of my numerous and far from wealthy relatives.

I do not know how far this candid answer was agreeable to Signor Gratarol. Much of it must certainly have gone against his grain, and a good deal he probably took for sarcasm. Nevertheless, he continued on the note of adulation which annoyed me. "In truth," he said, "I hardly hoped for your acceptance, knowing how much you value a quiet life. Yet perhaps you will do me the favour of suggesting some one fit to undertake the duty." "In my opinion," I replied, "the Marchese Francesco Albergati would be a very proper man.[1] He is

[1] Albergati was born at Bologna in 1728. The circumstances of his private life were curious. In 1748 he married a wife from whom he was divorced in 1751. In 1769 he married a second wife at Venice, who committed suicide. In 1789 he married a third wife. He lived principally at Venice and at his country seat at Zola, where he had a famous private theatre. He composed and translated a great many plays. His works were collected and published in an edition of several volumes at Bologna in 1827.

RUZZANTE (1525)

Illustrating the Italian Commedia dell' Arte, or Impromptu Comedy

an enthusiastic amateur, and has great experience in theatrical affairs. He has fixed his residence at Venice, and is sure to accept the post with pleasure." "Do you really think him capable?" asked Gratarol with the utmost gravity, as though we were discussing a matter of vast importance. "Most capable," I answered. "Pray allow me then," he continued, with the same ludicrous concern, "to propose Marchese Albergati to my company of noble amateurs at your recommendation!" "Certainly, if you think fit," I replied, with difficulty repressing a yawn. The long conversation about nothing had almost tired my patience out. At length he rose to take his leave, drowning me in an ocean of compliments. I thanked him for his visit, and promised to return it, blessing Heaven for his departure.

After Signor Gratarol's banquet, which was described to me as regal in its pomp, the whole of Sacchi's troupe let their spite loose against Mme. Ricci. It was a storm of innuendoes and equivocal allusions, upon which my presence barely imposed a check. Some of the actresses went so far as to ask me in private whether I was not at last convinced of what they had always told me about that woman's character. I fenced with them as well as I could, sometimes pretending not to understand, sometimes rebuking their evil gossip, and sometimes turning my back with affected indignation. And so I rubbed on, always sighing for the arrival of Lent.

One evening, her sister Marianna met me in a little room behind the theatre. "What do you think, Sir Count," she said, "of this extraordinary turn of affairs?" "What are you talking about?" I replied. "About my madcap sister, of course," she added: "Teodora was always a hair-brained, giddy, imprudent creature of caprice. But who would have thought that, after five years of countenance and real friendship extended to her by you, she would have given herself so openly and formally to a man like Gratarol?" While I was revolving some answer, which should signify nothing, a knot of actors entered, and relieved me of my embarrassment.

I had always invited some of the comedians to a dinner at my house before the end of the Carnival; and this year, not choosing to deviate from old custom, I fixed it for a Thursday. Among the guests were Ricci and her husband, Fiorilli and Zannoni, with other actresses and actors. The conversation was as brilliant as usual; but I noticed, to my deep regret, that Fiorilli's witticisms returned again and again to certain new ornaments worn by Mme. Ricci. His allusions seemed to cut her to the quick. She blushed, and shifted on her chair without replying. The others laughed, and I vainly strove to introduce fresh topics. From this day forward, rumour dealt loudly and cruelly with her reputation. Folk went so far as to assert that every evening she retired from the theatre with Signor

Gratarol to his casino, and spent the whole night there. How far these reports were true, I do not pretend to judge. It is certain, however, that her imprudent connection with a notorious voluptuary was nothing short of disastrous to a woman in her profession. How Signor Gratarol justified his behaviour in causing this open scandal to a person still ostensibly beneath my protection, can only be conjectured. It is possible that Mme. Ricci concealed from him the obligations she was under to me, and my repeated declarations that I should abandon her to her fate if anything of the sort occurred. Yet he must have been aware that he was placing me in a false and odious position.

All Sacchi's troupe made it only too clear that they wished me to drop her at once and for ever. Their innuendoes directed against myself, and the continuous open gossip which went on, overcame my philosophy at last, and I resolved to suspend my visits altogether without waiting for Lent. Yet, before I exposed her unprotected to the hatred of her comrades, I thought it best to take one final step, which proved, as things turned out, a false one. I went to her sister Marianna, and told her to warn Teodora that I meant at last to leave her. I could not play the part of a fool and go-between. I was not jealous, and had never been jealous of her other admirers; but a man in Gratarol's position, notorious for libertinism, belonging to my own class, and with the eyes

of the world upon him, made my position as her friend and protector odious beyond expression. She must choose between giving him up or losing me for ever.

Marianna promised to discharge her mission, and spared no words of reprobation for her sister's conduct. I ought, however, to have reflected that a ballet-girl would be sure to misinterpret my real delicacy, and to depict me as a jealous lover.

Two days later on, both sisters appeared at my house. Teodora began to excuse herself. "My sister tells me that you are angry with me, and I am come to ask the reason why." I replied that I was not angry, but that I wanted to save her from certain ruin. If that was impossible, I meant to provide for my own peace of mind and honour by doing what I had always said I should. She begged me, with exaggerated demonstrations of concern, to give her but one chance, averring that she had certain things she wished to say to me in private. I weakly consented to pay her a visit at her own house, and went there on the following day. There I found her still in bed; and sitting down, I begged her to make a clean breast of everything which concerned Signor Gratarol. She told me frankly that she was not in love with him, and that she had only received a couple of trifling presents at his hands—a little Neapolitan watch-chain and an embroidered satin muff. Upon this, I advised her, if things had not gone further, to write

a polite letter to Gratarol, begging him, as a gentleman, to discontinue his attentions. She might return his two presents, as a mark of delicacy. The actress sighed, and said she supposed she must follow my advice. I took her at her word; and added that, since I found her so well disposed to adopt the only right course open to her, I was willing not to withdraw my protection.

I did not inquire whether she actually wrote the letter to Signor Gratarol, but continued to treat her with politeness, trusting to her word and honour. One evening, when she had no engagement at the theatre, I proposed that we should go together to the opera at S. Samuele. She accepted, but showed a singular curiosity to know the row and number of the box. "I will send you the key," I said, "this morning, and you will see where it is placed. If you like to go before me with your husband, I will look in during the evening." I fancied there must be some intrigue hidden under this anxiety about the number of the box; but I said nothing, and did what I had promised.

When the evening came, I went to S. Samuele, and found Mme. Ricci with her husband in the box. His duties at the other theatre obliged him to retire, and I was left alone with Teodora. Scarcely had I taken my seat, when I heard the door of the next box open, and some one entered, who was greeted by the actress with charming airs of coquetry and win-

ning grace. I had my shoulders turned to the person, but I divined who it was. The Ricci had informed Gratarol that she was going with me to S. Samuele, and had given him the number of our box. Pretending to notice him by accident, I turned my head round, bowed, and begged him to excuse me for not having yet returned his visit. He overwhelmed me, as usual, with a shower of those compliments which won for him the fame of eloquence.

"This then," said I to myself, "is the woman's way of writing notes at my advice!" However, I attended her back to her house without making any comment on what had happened.

The last day of this most tedious Carnival at length arrived. It was the custom for the leading members of Sacchi's troupe, together with a numerous company of friends, to celebrate the evening with a supper at some inn. I had always accompanied Teodora Ricci on these occasions; and I now determined to put the final stroke to our friendship by acting as usual. After a very festive supper, the whole party adjourned to the opera at S. Samuele. The performance began at midnight, and several boxes had been engaged beforehand. It chanced that I found myself alone in one of them with Mme. Ricci. Thereupon, seeing that the Carnival was over, and the moment of my emancipation had arrived, I opened my mind to the young woman, and informed her that my patience was exhausted. She tried to turn the matter off with a

jest; her liaison with Gratarol had been a mere Carnival caprice, which would end with the Carnival. (As if that made any difference to me!) I replied with firmness that it was now too late. She had thrown away the fruits of my benefits conferred on her through five long years, and had repaid them by exposing me to shame and insult. I forgave her and left her at liberty; but abode by my decision to withdraw from her friendship.

"What!" said she, "shall I not be your gossip[1] any more?" "Please to forget that title," I replied: "a good woman does not try to turn her gossip into a simpleton or go-between. I shall not become your enemy, and have no petty thirst for vengeance. If I were wise, I should cut my old connection with the troupe whom I have protected for twenty years. That would secure me against further annoyances and tittle-tattle. But I do not mean to take this step. And you may be very grateful to me; for were I to leave them, they would ascribe the loss of their great champion to you alone." "Oh, what will ever happen to me?" she exclaimed with an air of tragic desperation. "Nothing," I added laughing, "except what you have sought and brought about."

When the opera was over, I attended her home, and, standing in the doorway, repeated that this was the last time she would be troubled with my company.

[1] The relation of gossip or *Compare di San Giovanni* is reckoned sacred at Venice.

"Do you not mean then to visit me any more?" cried she. "You certainly will not be exposed to that disturbance," I replied. "Oh, we shall see you here, we shall see you!" she answered with a cheerful air of security. I could not help laughing at her conceit. "So you persist in looking on me as a hopeless victim of your charms! If I do come to visit you, you will see me, certes!" "But I shall come to you," she added. "I hope that you will never give yourself the trouble," said I; and with these final words I turned my back and walked away.

So ended the open and ingenuous friendship which I had carried on for five years with this woman.

LV.

Annoyances to which I was exposed by the Ricci after this act of rupture.—Some little matters concerning Sacchi's company and my protection of them.—A long and tedious illness.—The "Droghe d'Amore" resumed.

I was not destined to escape without further annoyances. A woman wounded in her *amour propre* becomes the worst of wild beasts. This I soon discovered; for Mme. Ricci, when she saw I was in earnest, made a point of vexing me, as though, forsooth, she could worry me back into goodwill!

That Lent the actors stayed at Venice; and we used to meet at Sacchi's house during the evenings. A game of cards, a plate of fritters, a bottle of wine, and a lavish expenditure of wit and merriment, formed the staple of our recreation. The Ricci had never been in the habit of joining these parties. She did so now in order to launch sarcasms at me. Her rudeness became so intolerable, that, after bearing it in silence for three evenings, I stayed at home. This alarmed the actors, by whom I was regarded as their tutelary genius. They came to me and told me that she had been peremptorily forbidden to show her face again at their reunions.

This did not improve her temper; and her next move was an attempt to draw me into correspondence. First came a letter complaining that my manservant had spoken insultingly about her to her maid. Of course I paid no attention to such nonsense. Then, about the middle of Lent, arrived a huge epistle in a handwriting I did not recognise. It turned out to be from her husband, who rated me soundly for having outraged his wife by withdrawing my protection. He had the impudence to say that my behaviour was unworthy of a gentleman. The remainder of this voluminous rigmarole consisted of arguments to prove the following thesis:—If a husband approves of the male friends his wife receives, her other male friends have no right to inquire into their character. "Farewell, compliant

husband!" cried I, folding up the letter, and laying it aside unanswered.

One morning during Holy Week my servant announced Mme. Ricci's husband. I allowed him to enter, asked him to sit beside me on the sofa, and told my man to bring him chocolate. Looking into the poor fellow's eyes, I could see that he had been forced to pay this visit, and that he was doing his very best to pluck up courage. "We are on the point of leaving for Mantua," he began, "and I am come to pay you my respects, to offer you my wife's regards, and to wish you good health." "You have given yourself unnecessary trouble," I replied; "nevertheless, I am obliged, and I wish you a good journey and a prosperous tour." He kept silence for a minute or so. Then he pulled himself together and began again: "By the way, I wrote you a letter some time since, which has not yet been answered." "You did wrong to write that letter," I rejoined, "and I did well to take no notice of it." Thinking that my indifference was a sign of meekness, he presumed so far as to reply with arrogance: "On the contrary, I did well to write it." I judged it best to change my tone and put the fellow down. So, knitting my brows and looking him hard in the face, I spoke as follows: "You did extremely wrong. Remember that you are in my house. Do not presume upon my civility and forbearance. I am astounded that you have the boldness to pursue me

into my own sitting-room, and to bolster up the dirty arguments of your epistle."

The wretch turned pale and sat like a statue. Just at this unlucky minute my servant came in and offered him a cup of chocolate. With trembling hand he took the cup and drank a single mouthful, then put it down upon the salver, saying he did not feel well enough to finish it. When the servant left the room he flung himself upon his knees and begged me to pardon him. "Get up," I said. "I am perfectly aware that you had nothing to do either with that letter or this visit. You are only an emissary, who does not count." Thus encouraged, he entered into a long recital, to which I listened because it gave me some amusement. "I shall tell you the whole truth," he said, "just as if I were kneeling before an altar. Signor Gratarol began to turn my wife's head with his candied orange-peel and Neapolitan bonbons. A box of the latter arrived one day at our house, together with a very flattering billet, expressing the donor's strong desire to be allowed to pay his respects to her. My wife was for sending an answer back by the servant, thanking him for the bonbons, and saying that his visits would be most acceptable. I bade her reflect that this might expose her to slander, and be disagreeable to yourself—the good Count Gozzi, the godfather of our child, our protector and adviser and benefactor for so many years. She called me a fool, and sent the note

against my will. You know, Sir Count, that with my wife it is all the same whether I speak or hold my tongue. By all that is sacred, I swear that I have told you the whole truth. Signor Gratarol began and continued his visits both by day and night, without any fault of mine, and without my consent." The opening of this flirtation by the gift of bonbons diverted me; and I sent Ricci's unfortunate husband away with the assurance that I was not angry with him, that Signor Gratarol's visits were of no consequence to me, and that I was firmly resolved not to renew an intimacy with his wife which she had forfeited by her folly.

Two days before Sacchi set out for Mantua, he came to me, and very civilly expressed his disappointment at my having done so little for the troupe with my pen during the past year. I told him that bad health and pressure of business had prevented me from attending to dramatic composition. Then he inquired whether I had not adapted Tirso da Molina's comedy for the Italian theatre. He had heard my *Droghe d'Amore* highly praised, especially by Mme. Ricci. I replied that it was true; I had nearly finished the piece, but finding it dull and prolix, I had laid it aside among my waste papers. On his insisting, and saying he should like to hear my play, I consented to read it aloud, and promised to see whether I could not bring myself to complete the last act in the course of the summer.

My health remaining weak, I passed the greater part of this summer at a little country-house I had near Stra upon the Brenta. Here I rapidly recovered strength, more by open-air exercise and rational diet than by drinking the Cila waters recommended by my doctor. In the long idle days of this *villeggiatura*, I set hand once more to the *Droghe d'Amore*, and finished it with indescribable aversion. Leaving Stra for Padua, I took the play with me, and read it aloud to my friend Massimo, under whose roof I was staying. He listened patiently all through the tedious declamation, praised certain passages of the comedy, and said he thought the chief objection to it was its prodigious length. When I returned to Venice, I made up my mind to put this abortion of my talent on the shelf; but Sacchi would not let it rest. He wrote so urgently upon the subject, that I begged my brother Gasparo to undergo the mortal tedium of hearing and pronouncing judgment on the play. His opinion was that, though it contained some excellent scenes, it too closely resembled my *Principessa Filosofa* in parts, and that its length would render it ineffective. The comedy was one of character and sentiments, and had no spectacular novelties to enliven it. However, he promised to read it through, and see whether judicious retrenchments could be made. After ten days or so, I received the manuscript again, with my brother's verdict that nothing could be omitted without break-

ing the warp on which the plot was woven. Accordingly, I wrote to Sacchi, saying that the *Droghe d'Amore* would really not do, and promising some other piece instead. I had, indeed, already planned my *Metafisico* and *Bianca Contessa di Melfi*, but had not had the time to dramatise them.

Meanwhile Sacchi came to Venice in a prodigious bustle. Meeting me upon the piazza, he said that Mme. Ricci was about to break her engagement and to go to Paris. I persuaded him to remit the fine of 500 ducats, provided she continued to serve the company until the end of the next Carnival. This arrangement was finally concluded by the intervention of a Venetian gentlewoman of the Valmarana family. So Sacchi had to look out for another *prima donna*. His choice had already fallen on a certain Regina, the daughter of an actor, whom he begged me to go and see. I found the girl decidedly ill-favoured. Still I begged her to recite a piece from my *Principessa Filosofa*. She spoke with an asthmatic voice and the lowest of plebeian accents, made frequent mistakes which spoiled the sense, and was insufferably monotonous in her delivery. I told Sacchi that this young woman would not do for him. But alas! Cupid had played one of his pranks with the octogenarian Don Juan, and Regina was engaged at a salary of 400 ducats, beside special allowances for her outfit. The effects of this girl's introduction into the troupe were disastrous. She proved its evil

genius by her bad character and by her ascendancy over the *capocomico*, playing no small part in that final dissolution of the company which I shall have to relate.

LVI.

Ricci returns to Venice.—Her metamorphosis and my reflections on it.—Sacchi entreats to have the "Droghe d'Amore," and I abandon it to him, in order to save myself from persecution.—The play is read by me before the actors.

Autumn brought the actors back again as usual; and I composed a prologue for the opening of their theatre, which was recited by Mme. Ricci. I used to meet that actress in the rooms behind the scenes, and was much struck by the singular change which had come over her. She continued to do everything she could to annoy me; and I kept wondering how it was that she had managed to conceal her true nature so cleverly during the five years of our friendship. Now she openly bragged about the presents she received; the wax-candles which gave light to her apartment; the exquisite wines, perfect coffee, boxes of bonbons, refined chocolate, and other dainties which furnished her repasts. She even went to the length of inviting that old satyr Sacchi to her house,

adding, in order to insult me: "You will find no tiresome moral preachers on the *convenances* to frighten you away!" While as anxious as ever to lure me back, she piqued herself on letting it be understood that she had given me my dismissal. Indeed, I found it somewhat difficult to treat the woman with that reserved civility which I wished to preserve toward her in public.

The amusement I enjoyed in studying her new ways and manners compensated for these gnat-bites. She had become in six months shameless and affected, as meddlesome and garrulous as a magpie. She pretended to have learned all kinds of important sciences, and gravely informed us that the game *rocambol* was derived from two English words. She had left off wearing drawers, she said, because it was healthy to ventilate the body, adding details of the most comical indecency. Always dreaming about Paris, Venice had become a kind of sewer in her opinion. The Venetians and Italians in general were a race of stupid mediocrities, unenlightened and insupportable. "I am dying to get to Paris!" she exclaimed; "there the rich financiers fling purses full of louis d'or at actresses with as little regard as one flings a pear in Italy." And then to show how well she had got rid of prejudices: "Ah! blessed power of making love without the checks of a misguided education! To make love through our lifetime is the supreme happiness of mortals!" Not

COVIELLO (1550)

Illustrating the Italian Commedia dell' Arte, or Impromptu Comedy

a word or a thought for her husband and two children.

Every evening she filled the theatre with such a potent smell of musk, that people complained and said it gave them the headache. "What a prejudice!" she cried with a grimace in what she thought the French style. "At Paris everything smells of musk, down to the very trees in the Tuileries gardens, against which ladies may have leant a moment." She was taking French lessons; and her retentive memory made her catch up phrases, which she flung about with volubility. Paris entered into everything she said. She modelled her gait and action and tone of voice upon what she conceived to be the Parisian manner, producing a most laughable caricature which spoiled her acting. I felt really sorry for her, while observing this progressive deterioration in her art. She had been an excellent comedian in the Italian style, and would certainly have been appreciated on the stage at Paris. Now she had become an ape of the French race, surcharged with affectation, and unsuccessful in her travesty. It is impossible, I thought, that the Parisians, who require an Italian actress, and not a mongrel imitation of themselves, will put up with her. This prognostication, to my sincere regret, was verified when she appeared in that metropolis.

We had reached the first days of November in the year 1776, and Sacchi's receipts were languishing.

He had been spoiled by getting gratis at my hands two or three pieces annually, which found favour with the public. This made him careless about supplying himself with novelties; while I was so engaged with law business that I had no time to dramatise my *Metafisico* and *Bianca di Melfi*. In fact, I had nothing on hand but the *Droghe d'Amore*. Pestered by perpetual applications for this comedy, in an evil moment I drew it from its sepulchre and tossed it over to the *capocomico*. I told him that he might take the manuscript as a gift, but that if the play failed before the public, as I thought it would, I should never exercise my pen again on compositions for the stage.

It was impossible to foresee that a chain of untoward circumstances would convert this harmless drama into an indecent personal satire upon Signor Gratarol. Mendacious and vindictive meddling on the part of an infuriated actress, false steps and ill-considered opposition on the part of the man whom she deceived, the pique of great folk who disliked him, and the ingenuity of comedians eager for pecuniary gains, effected the transformation. I was placed in a false light—shown up to public curiosity as the prime agent in a piece of vulgar retaliation, the victim of a weak and jealous fancy. If I could have divined what lay beyond the scope of divination, I swear to God that I should have flung that comedy into the flames rather than let it become the property of a *capocomico*.

Far be it from me to assert that Gratarol was not brought upon the stage in that very comedy of my creation. He certainly was. But he owed this painful distinction to his own bad management, to the credulity with which he drank the venom of a spiteful woman's tongue, to the steps he took for prohibiting my play which roused the curiosity of the whole city and gave it a *succès de scandale*, to the enmity of great people whom he had imprudently defamed, and finally to the artifices of an acting company who saw their way to making money out of these conflicting interests. I was victimised, as will appear in the course of my narration, for the truth of which I can refer to a crowd of worthy witnesses. I lost control over my play. I saw it bandied about from hand to hand. Condemned to inactivity by magistrates of the State, I had it turned before my eyes, against my will, into a vile engine for inflicting pain upon a person of whom I had never once thought while composing it. Indeed, the part I played in the affair would furnish forth the subject of another comedy, with me for protagonist.

Well, soon after I had placed the manuscript in Sacchi's hands, he told me that it had passed the official revision and had been licensed for the stage. Only some eight or ten lines were struck out. This happens to every play which is referred to the censors of the State. Nothing occurred which called its character in question, or suggested that it was

more than a comedy with traits of satire upon society in general.

Sacchi announced the new play to the public, and its capricious title whetted their interest. I distributed the rôles between the actors of the troupe; but later on, this assignment of parts was altered, without my knowledge or consent, in order to fit the cap which Signor Gratarol constructed for himself upon its fabricator's head. The actors saw their way to pointing a caricature, undesigned by me, by shifting the rôle of Don Adone from one player to another. Looking only to receipts at the door of the theatre, they were dead to every other consideration.

After distributing the rôles, I had to read the comedy aloud. This is necessary; for players are so made among us that, unless they catch the spirit of their parts from the author, they are sure to spoil them by some misconception of their values. The reading took place at Sacchi's lodgings. Mme. Ricci appeared in all her glory, and established herself at my right hand. I shall not enlarge upon the characters and plot of the *Droghe d'Amore*, because the play will be found among my works in print. Suffice it to say, that when I had toiled onward to the sixteenth scene of the first act, where Don Adone makes his appearance on the stage, Mme. Ricci began to writhe upon her seat. One would have imagined that she had never heard the play

before, and that this character took her by surprise. Yet more than a year ago she had been introduced to Don Adone, as I have said above, at my own house.[1]

I continued my reading. But whenever Don Adone turned up—and his part is merely episodical in the drama—Mme. Ricci marked her agitation by still more extraordinary signs of impatience. She muttered between her teeth and moved about upon her chair, in a way which made me think that she was indisposed. At last I turned to her and said: "Madam, you seem to be more bored than I am by this reading!" The only answer which I got was a shrug of the shoulders, a turn of the body to the side away from me, and an exclamation: "Oh, 'tis nothing, nothing!"

The reading continued. At every word which Don Adone uttered, Mme. Ricci repeated her grimaces and contortions of the body. I bluntly reminded her that she knew all about this personage twelve months and more ago, and that she had urged me to complete the play. Forced to say something, she put on a sour sardonic smile, and murmured: "Well, well! That Don Adone of yours, that Don Adone of yours!"

Like lightning, the truth flashed upon my brain. I saw what she was up to. In spite of having been, as it were, an accomplice in my comedy those many months before, she meant to fix the character of Don Adone upon Signor Gratarol. This was her plan for

[1] See above, p. 227.

rousing his resentment against myself, for revenging herself for my indifference, and for stirring up a scandal worse than all the humdrum scenes my flat comedy contained.

I finished my reading, as may be imagined, in a perfunctory manner, flung the manuscript down upon the table, and told the assembled actors that I did not expect the piece to succeed. It was far too feeble and too prolix. All the same, I had given it away to them, and they must do as they liked with it.

Sacchi, on the spot, gave orders for the copying of the several parts, which were to be distributed as I had settled. The party then broke up, and I kept my eyes upon Signora Ricci. She seemed in a great hurry to get away, as though some one were waiting for her, and I saw that she was bent on mischief.

LVII.

The history of the "Droghe d'Amore."—In spite of my endeavours to the contrary, Gratarol, by his imprudent conduct, forces it upon the stage.—It is represented for the first time.—The town talks, and a scandal is created.

The impressions left upon my mind after this night's reading were painful. I expected some disturbance of the peace through the malice of that woman, who had now become irreconcilably antago-

nistic. Meeting Sacchi next morning on the Piazza di San Marco, I asked him whether he had noticed the strange conduct of Mme. Ricci on the previous evening. He said that he had certainly been aware of something wrong, but that he could not ascribe it to any cause. Then I communicated my suspicion. "The actress," said I, "means to persuade Signor Gratarol that he is being satirised under the character of Don Adone." "What is her object?" exclaimed Sacchi. "That I will tell you briefly," I replied: "she wants to gain credit with her new friend, to inflict an injury on your troupe, and to cause me annoyance by stirring up a quarrel between me and the gentleman in question." "It is not impossible," said Sacchi, "that she is planning something of the kind. But what are your reasons for thinking so?" "If you had only been attentive to her mutterings and attitudinisings last evening, when the part of Don Adone was being read, you would not put that question," I answered. "I ask you, therefore, as a friend, to withdraw my play until the next season. Lent will soon arrive. The Ricci will go to Paris, and Signor Gratarol to Naples. You can make use of the *Droghe d'Amore* later on, when its appearance will cause no scandal." After some persuasion, he promised to fulfil my wishes; and next morning he told me that the play had been suspended.

Here the affair would have rested if Signor Gratarol, poisoned by his mistress's report, had not

taken a step fatal for his own tranquillity. She returned, as I had imagined, from the reading of my play, and told him that he was going to be exposed upon the stage in the person of Don Adone. He set all his influence at work to prevent the public exhibition of the comedy. The result was that, four days afterwards, Sacchi came to me in great confusion and told me that Signor Francesco Agazi, censor of plays for the Magistrato sopra alla Bestemmia, had sent for the *Droghe d'Amore*. A new revision was necessitated by certain complaints which had been brought against the rôle of Don Adone.

"So then," said I, "you have given the manuscript to Signor Agazi?" "No," he answered; "I was afraid that I might lose it altogether. I told that gentleman that I had lent it to a certain lady.[1] He smiled and said that when she had done with it he expected to have it in his hands again. In fact, not wishing to be proved a liar in this matter, I took the play to the lady I have mentioned, related the whole story about Gratarol and Ricci, and recommended myself to her protection." Sacchi could

[1] This lady was the celebrated Caterina Dolfin Tron, wife of the Procuratore Andrea Tron. Her husband exercised such influence in the State that he was called *Il Padrone*. A terrible portrait is drawn of her by Gratarol in his *Narrazione*, vol. i. pp. 23 and 44. To him she certainly behaved with cruel tyranny. But she was a woman of brilliant talents and fascinating person, who gave tone to literary and political society in Venice.

not have taken any step more calculated to give importance to this incident. I said as much to him upon the spot; predicted that the lady, who was known to have a grudge against Signor Gratarol, would do her best to circulate the scandal; assured him that the whole town would blaze with rumour, that I should be discredited, and that he might find himself in a very awkward position. "The tribunals of the State," I added, "are not to be trifled with by any of your circumventions."

Signor Gratarol had made a great mistake. Instead of listening to the gossip of an actress, and then setting the machinery of the State in motion by private appeals to persons of importance, he ought to have come at once to me. I should have assured him of the simple truth, and the *Droghe d'Amore* would have appeared without doing any dishonour to either of us.

His manœuvring had the effect of putting all Venice upon the *qui vive*, and placing an instrument of retaliation against him in the hands of powerful enemies. The noble lady, Caterina Dolfin Tron, to whom Sacchi took my comedy, read it through, and read it to her friends, and passed it about among a clique of high-born gentlemen and ladies. None of them found any mark of personal satire in the piece. All of them condemned Gratarol for his self-consciousness, and accused him of seeking to deprive the public of a rational diversion, while moving heaven

and earth to reverse the decision of the censors of the State.

In two days the town buzzed of nothing but my wretched drama, Gratarol, and me. It was rumoured that I had composed a sanguinary satire. Not only Gratarol, but a crowd of gentlemen and ladies were to be brought upon the scene. A whole theatre, with its pit, boxes, stage, and purlieus could not have contained the multitude of my alleged victims. Everybody knew their exact names and titles. Neighbours laid their heads together, quarrelled, denied, maintained, argued, whispered in each other's ears, waxed hot and angry, told impossible anecdotes, contradicted their own words, and, what was most amusing, everybody drew his information from an infallible source.

One thing they held for certain—that I had made Gratarol the protagonist of my satire. That became a fixed idea, which it only wanted his own imprudence to turn into a fact.

Knowing pretty well where the real point of the mischief lay, I determined to act, if possible, upon the better feelings of Mme. Dolfin Tron.[1] I had enjoyed the privilege of her acquaintance for many

[1] Gozzi has not perhaps quite told the whole truth about his relations to Mme. Tron. They were certainly more intimate at one period than he here admits. He formed a member of the society whom she received on Monday evenings at the Casino di San Giuliano, and dedicated his *Marfisa Bizzarra* to her in terms of high compliment (V.E. non è nimica, non è ignorante, non è dispettosa, non è sospettosa, e sa essere benefattrice

years. But my unsociable and unfashionable habits made me negligent of those attentions which are expected from a man of quality. I did not pay her the customary visits; and when we met, she was in the habit of playfully saluting me with the title of *Bear*. My brother Gasparo, on the contrary, saw her every day, and she bestowed on him the tender epithet of *Father*. Such being our respective relations, I thought it best to apply to him.

I asked my brother, then, to do all he could to induce this powerful lady to oppose the production of my comedy for at least the present season. Through the machinations of Signora Ricci, against my will, and much to my discredit, the piece was going to create a public scandal, with serious injury to a gentleman whom I had not meant to satirise. My brother, muttering a curse on meddlesome women in general and actresses in particular, undertook the office. He did not succeed. Mme. Tron replied that I was making far too much fuss about nothing, and that my comedy had passed beyond my control. It had become the property of a *capocomico*, and was at the present moment under the inspection of the State.

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volontaria anche di coloro che non le chiedono favori). At the same time he disagreed with Mme. Tron's liberal opinions, and disapproved of her philosophising turn of mind. It is quite possible that before the date 1776 their former intimacy may have cooled. Gratarol himself observes that Gozzi had not frequented her society during the seven years prior to these events.

Not many days elapsed before I was summoned to the presence of Francesco Agazi, the censor, as I have before observed, for the Signori sopra la Bestemmia.[1] I found him clothed in his magisterial robes, and he began as follows: "You gave a comedy, entitled *Le Droghe d'Amore*, to the company of Sacchi. I perused it and licensed it for the theatre at S. Salvatore. The comedy has been passed, and must appear. You have no control over it. Pray take no steps to obstruct its exhibition. The magistracy which I serve does not err in judgment." I could not refrain from commenting upon Signor Gratarol's action in this matter, and protesting that I had never meant to satirise the man. He bade me take no heed of persons like Gratarol, whose heads were turned by outlandish fashions. "I made some retrenchments," he added, "in the twelfth scene of the last act of your comedy. They amount, I think, to about ten or twelve verses. These lines expressed sentiments such as are usually maintained by men of Gratarol's sort. You meant them to be understood ironically. But our Venetians will not take them so. What strikes their ear, they retain in its material and literal sense. And they learn much which is mischievous, unknown to them before.—May I parenthetically observe that certain gentlemen want to give orders where they have no right to speak?

[1] This magistracy exercised control over the morals of Venice.

—I repeat to you that the magistracy which I serve does not err ; and I repeat the decree which has been passed." Having spoken these words, Signor Agazi bowed, and left me for his business.

What passed between me and the censor I repeated to friends of mine, who will bear me witness that I found myself estopped in my attempts to suppress the comedy. It had to appear; and Signor Gratarol owed this annoyance to his having powerful enemies.

Unfortunately he did his best to exasperate these enemies. Teodora Ricci, primed by him and parroting his words, went about libelling men and women of the highest rank, whom she had never seen. Phrases of the grossest scurrility were hurled at eminent people by their names. "If Gratarol has committed himself in this way to an actress," said I in my sleeve, "what must he not have let fall to other friends and acquaintances? Such indiscretion marks him out as little fitted for the post of ambassador at Naples or elsewhere."

I have said that I had lost all authority over my wretched drama. I only wanted to see it well hissed on its first appearance, and to bury the annoyances it caused me in a general overthrow. Yet I was obliged to be present at rehearsals. At the first which I attended, I noticed that two of the rôles had been changed. I had given Don Adone to an actor called Luigi Benedetti, and the jealous Don Alessandro to Giovanni Vitalba. Sacchi reversed my disposition

of these parts, alleging that Benedetti was better fitted to sustain the character of a furious lover than Vitalba, who was somewhat of a stick. This seemed to me not unreasonable; and I was so accustomed to have my plays cut and hacked about by the actors, that I accepted his decision.

At the second rehearsal, Mme. Ricci asked me negligently if I knew why this alteration had been made. I answered that Sacchi had explained it to my satisfaction. She held her tongue, thinking doubtless that I was well acquainted with certain machinations of which she had fuller knowledge than I.

At last the piece appeared—it was the night of January 10, 1777—at the theatre of S. Salvatore. I went there in good time, and found the entrance thronged with a vast multitude. For three hours people had been clamouring for seats, and the whole house was crammed. They told me that the boxes had been sold at fabulous prices. This might have swelled another playwright's heart with pride. I, on the contrary, was extremely dejected by finding my worst anticipations realised. Pushing my way through the press, which encumbered every passage and clung against the walls, I reached the *coulisses* with much toil.[1] There I saw a swarm of masks begging for

[1] Gratarol gives a vivid picture of this throng. "Many hundreds of persons were sent away from the doors, since the vast area of the theatre was crammed full. Boxes, which on ordinary nights were paid two pauls, this evening brought a couple of sequins, and not a single one was empty."—*Narrazione*, vol. i. p. 68.

places anywhere at any price. "What the deuce is the meaning of this extraordinary concourse?" I exclaimed. The Ricci answered me at once with: "Don't you know? The town has come to see your satire on a certain person." I put her down by saying bluntly that more than a year ago she heard my play, and knew that there was no personal satire in it. It was not my fault if diabolical intrigues and a succession of blunders had given it a false complexion. She dropped her eyes. I turned my back, and took refuge in a box I had upon the third row of the theatre.

Going up the staircase, I caught sight before me of Gratarol's unhappy wife, and heard her chattering to certain gentlemen she met upon the way: "I wanted to see my husband on the stage." These words of the poor deserted woman enlightened me as to the expectation of the public. Yet why was the whole house so intoxicated? why did a wife look forward to the spectacle of her husband's caricature? I can only explain this phenomenon by remembering the corruption of our age. Women seduced and left to shift for themselves, rivals supplanted in their love-affairs, jealous husbands, wives abandoned and heart-broken, form an inflammable audience for such a piece as the *Droghe d'Amore* under the notorious circumstances of its first appearance.

Sacchi joined me in my box; and casting my eyes over the sea of faces, I soon perceived Signor Gratarol with a handsome woman at his side. He had come to

air his philosophy, but I trembled for him. The curtain rose, and the play proceeded with great spirit. All the actors did their best. I was satisfied with their performance, and the audience applauded. At length, toward the close of the first act, Don Adone appeared. Then, and not till then, I understood the reason of the change of parts by which this rôle had fallen to Vitalba.[1] He was a good fellow, but a poor artist; and unfortunately he resembled Signor Gratarol pretty closely both in figure and colour of hair. The knavery of the comedians had furnished him with clothes cut and trimmed exactly on the pattern of those worn by Gratarol. He had been taught to imitate his mincing walk and other gestures. The caricature was complete; and I had to confess that Signor Gratarol had actually been parodied upon the stage in my comedy of the *Droghe d'Amore*. Innocent as I was of any wish to play the part of Aristophanes in modern Venice, the fact was obvious; and the audience greeted Vitalba with a storm of applause and rounds of clapping which deafened our ears.

I turned sharply upon Sacchi, and complained bitterly of the liberty he had taken with my unoffending comedy. He only shrugged his shoulders, and said he was afraid that an exhibition which promised so well for his money-box might be sup-

[1] Gratarol asserts plainly (*Narr. Apol.*, vol. i. pp. 63, 65, 66) that Mme. Tron induced Sacchi to change the rôles and to dress up Vitalba in clothes resembling his own. Gozzi tacitly admits the truth of this.

pressed as a public scandal. That was all I could extort from him; and the play advanced to the middle of the third act, accompanied with universal approval. Whenever Don Adone entered and spoke a line or two, he was greeted with thunders of applause. I still hoped for those salutary hisses which might have damned the piece. The audience had been crammed together now for full seven hours; they numbered some two thousand persons, and were largely composed of people from the lower ranks of life. It was no wonder that they began to be restless, fought together, tried to leave the house, and raised a din which drowned the voices of the actors. Don Adone made his last exit, and there was nothing to excite interest but the dregs of an involved and stationary plot. The hubbub rose to a tumult, and my hopes rose with it. The actors gabbled through the last scenes in helpless unintelligible dumb-show. At last the drop-scene fell upon a storm of cat-calls, howls, hisses, and vociferations. I turned to Sacchi and said: "Your vile machinations deserved this retribution. Now you will admit that I prophesied the truth about my play." "Pooh!" he answered, "the play took well enough up to a certain point. It is only necessary to shorten it a little, and we shall not have the same scene another night." Then he left the box all in a heat, without waiting for my reply and without even bidding me good-night.

LVIII.

Gratarol tries to stop the performance of the play, which is no longer in my power.—Intervention of Signor Carlo Maffei.—Conference with him and Gratarol at my house.—The worst hour I ever lived through.

Next morning the actors came to me with joy beaming on their faces, and announced that the *Droghe d'Amore* was going to be performed again. The town insisted on its repetition; and they had brought the manuscript, hoping I would condescend to make some alterations and curtailments.

Much as I disliked the news, I was glad at least to get my composition back. I made the players promise to modify Don Adone's costume, so that the effect of caricature might be reduced, and then sat down to hack away at the comedy. Besides shortening it at the expense of structure, plot, and coherence of parts, I carefully erased all passages which might seem to have some bearing upon Signor Gratarol. In this way, by mutilating my work and changing the costume of Don Adone, I flattered myself that the illusion of the public might be dissipated. Vain hope! The cancer had taken firm hold, and was beyond the reach of any cautery.

The *Droghe d'Amore* was repeated upon four suc-

cessive nights to crowded audiences.[1] Don Adone, in spite of my endeavours, still formed the principal attraction. All I could do was to persuade Sacchi to replace it by another piece upon the fifth evening. I kept away from the theatre after the second representation; and on the morning of the fifth it gave me satisfaction, while crossing the Rialto, to read placards announcing an improvised comedy at S. Salvatore. "Sacchi," said I, "has kept his word." But this was not the case. Plenty of people stopped to tell me what had happened at the theatre the night before. Just as the curtain was going up and a full house was calling for the spectacle, a messenger arrived to say that Mme. Ricci had fallen downstairs, hurting her leg so badly that she could not move. An indescribable tumult arose; shrieks, screams, curses, squabbles, hustlings,—all the commotion of an eager audience deprived of its legitimate amusement.

When I reached the piazza, several actors of the troupe confirmed the news in all its details. They added that Ricci's husband had to go before the footlights in order to assure the public of his wife's

[1] Gratarol describes the public excitement of Venice. "In the houses, the shops, the open squares, all sorts and conditions of folk were chattering about the play. When I entered the Piazza di S. Marco, the idle people who crowd the coffee-houses under the Procuratie Vecchie, lacqueys, barbers, players, spies, pimps, and baser beings, if such there be, came swarming out by tens and twenties to stare at me, walked in front, lagged behind, dogged my steps, jostled me, compared notes with each other as to my resemblance to the vile actor travestied to mimic me."—*Narrazione*, vol. i. p. 73.

accident. But nobody believed that this was more than a ruse concocted by Signor Gratarol to stop the play. Surgeons were sent to Mme. Ricci's house, who reported her in perfect health. Signor Vendramini forwarded an account of the disturbance at his theatre to the tribunals of the State, and they decreed that the comedy was to be repeated on the night of the 17th. An officer of the Council of Ten received orders to attend Mme. Ricci to the theatre on that occasion, and see that she performed her duty.

Thus Gratarol's unworthy stratagem made matters infinitely worse for us. I only discovered at a later date that he was seeking to gain time for dark and treacherous machinations against my person.

On the 15th of January I found myself, as usual, at S. Salvatore, expecting one of those old-fashioned improvised comedies which never fail to divert me. My excellent friend, Signor Carlo Maffei, stepped up, and begged for a few moments' serious conversation. I assented; we entered his box; he carefully secured the door, and made the following communication. But before proceeding to relate what passed between us, I must describe a few traits of this worthy gentleman's character. He is the very soul of honour, scrupulously upright in all his dealings, incapable of trickery or meanness, but gifted with such tenderness of heart and sensibility that he sometimes falls into mistakes of judgment about people who are not distinguished by his own sterling

qualities. Signor Maffei only erred in admiring me and my writings beyond their merits. Yet he lived a very different life from mine. He was a prominent member of that society which is called *bon ton* and *the great world* at Venice. Partaking freely of its amusements, he had formed an intimacy with Signor Gratarol. Indeed, he must have known that gentleman several years before he became my friend. This accounts for the proposal which I shall now report.

"Gratarol's misfortunes," he began, "have made a deep and painful impression on my feelings. He came a little while ago to visit me, and literally drew tears from my eyes. He is in a state bordering on distraction. What he came to ask was whether I could undertake to arrange a conference between you and him apropos of that unfortunate comedy. It is indifferent to him whether we meet at my house or at yours."

When I heard this, I felt sure that some scorpion must be concealed beneath so tardy an attempt at reconciliation. I told Maffei so, and asked why Gratarol had not sought me out at the commencement, when Mme. Ricci was pouring her insidious venom into his ears. Now it was too late to do any good. I had lost the last thread of authority over my play. The Supreme Tribunal had taken cognisance of the affair, and we were both powerless to stir a finger. All the same, at Maffei's request, I was

willing to meet Gratarol, although I could not conceive what object he had in ferreting me out.

If I had but known, while my friend was pleading for him, that this horned serpent had just presented an information to the Inquisitors of State, denouncing me in person, and deliberately aiming at my honour and my safety, I should have returned a very different answer.[1]

In the end, after enumerating all that had occurred in the long history of my unlucky drama, I gave my consent, suggesting at the same time that the meeting had better not take place in my house, and expressly begging Signor Maffei to let Gratarol clearly understand beforehand that I was utterly helpless with regard to the *Droghe d'Amore.*

Maffei left the box at once, repaired to Signor Gratarol, and soon returned with the answer that his friend was absolutely determined to come to my house for the interview.

I spent a large part of that night in racking my brains to imagine what Gratarol could possibly hope to gain by this new step of his. Giving the problem

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[1] Gratarol has printed his petition to the Inquisitors (*Narr. Apol.*, i. 81). It is not very injurious to Gozzi, if the document is really what he sent. The reference to Gozzi runs thus: "Umana debolezza scossa da circonstanze troppo puerili e indegne di riferirsi alla maestà di questo Supremo Tribunale indusse il Sig. Co. Carlo Gozzi a sparger di satira una sua commedia tolta dallo Spagnuolo ed intitolata Le Droghe d'Amore, e ad innestarvi un carattere apposito unicamente per fare scherno e ridicolo dileggio dell' umilissima persona di me," &c.

up as insoluble, I laid a scheme of my own, the only one which seemed to me at all practicable, and which I resolved to propose to him upon the morning of the 16th. It was as follows. I should write a prologue addressed to the public, saying that my comedy was going to be stopped after the evening of the 17th, at my own request, because it had been turned to bad account and misinterpreted, to the injury of myself and persons whom I esteemed as friends. This prologue could be printed and distributed before the performance of the play. Then Signor Gratarol and I would go together, and take our places amicably side by side in a front box of the theatre. The whole world would see that we were not at enmity, and I should be able to convince him, as the play proceeded, that Don Adone was not intended to be a personal satire on himself.

The plan approved itself to my judgment, and I went to sleep, persuaded that I had found a satisfactory way out of our worst difficulties.

Next morning, the 16th of January, I rose betimes, entered my study, and hurriedly composed a little prologue of twenty-four lines. Hardly had I finished the last verse, when my servant announced Signor Gratarol in a sonorous voice. Yes, there was the raging Cerberus Gratarol, accompanied by the gentle lamb Maffei! And all hopes of concealing this visit from the public had vanished. My servant had their names upon his lips, and Venice would soon be

saying that my humiliated enemy had gone to prostrate himself at his persecutor's feet.[1]

Gratarol did not make his entrance like a suitor. He was closely masked, and came swaggering into my tiny workroom with the swaying gait which is called "English style." When he raised his mask, the steam from his face rose to the ceiling, and I could see by his rolling eyes, quivering lips, spasms of pain, and frensied contortions, that the man suffered like the Titan with the vulture preying on his liver.

We all three took seats, and Signor Gratarol opened the conference by saying: "I have come to visit you, not as a suitor, but as a reasoner upon the merits of this case. Pray do not interrupt the thread of my argument, but give me patient hearing to the end." For upwards of an hour he thundered and declaimed like an infuriate Demosthenes against what he chose to call my "vindictive comedy." "Not that the personage of Don Adone has the least resemblance to my character," he added, "but that you meant it to hurt and outrage me." Starting on this note, he proceeded to dilate upon the splendour of his birth and education, his widespread celebrity, the offices of State he had discharged, his election as ambassador

[1] This interview is related at length by Gratarol (*Narr. Apol.*, vol. i. pp. 97–110). His account differs in several minor particulars from Gozzi's. But one can see that Gozzi had it before him while writing what follows above.

at Naples, and the magnificent career which lay before him. "From the height of all this glory," said he, "I have fallen in a moment, and become the public laughing-stock through your comedy!" Then he touched upon his enemies among the great, and alluded significantly to a certain lady who had vowed his ruin. That led up to a moving picture of his present distress: "When I pass along the streets or cross the piazza in my magisterial robes, the very scum and *canaille* swarm around me, leave their shops, and point me out as the secretary to the Senate who is being turned to ridicule in your *Droghe d'Amore*." He writhed upon his seat and tears fell from his eyes as he spoke these words, never reflecting that it was not *my* play, but *his own* bad management which had brought these tragi-comic woes upon him.

Resuming the thread of his discourse, he imprudently let out the fact that during the last few days he had presented a petition—to what tribunal he did not say—for the suppression of my piece. Then, hastily catching himself up, as though he had gone farther than he meant, "In short," he added, "every door has been shut against me!" I was not so stupid as not to guess the awful tribunal to which an ambassador-elect had applied, and by which he had been rejected. Opening my eyes wide, I turned them meaningly on my worthy friend Maffei, as though to ask: "What devil of a visitor have you brought here for my torment?"

At length the pith of the oration came to light. Admitting me to be susceptible of justice, humane feeling, religion, honour, magnanimity, and a host of other virtues, Gratarol laid it down as an axiom that "I was able and that I ought to stop the performance of the comedy upon the evening of the 17th, and so long as the world lasted." "*Able* and *ought*," exclaimed I to myself; "when I have made it clear to Maffei that I cannot stir a finger to prevent the play, and have already been rebuked by a respectable magistrate for attempting to do so!" I perceived that Maffei had omitted to inform Gratarol of my powerlessness. However, I determined to hear his speech to the end in patience. He now proceeded to demonstrate my power by asserting that Sacchi was not in a position to refuse any of my requests;[1] Sacchi had declared he would be governed by me in the matter of the comedy; Sacchi was independent of the patrician Vendramini; it was consequently my duty to put pressure upon Sacchi; all I had to do was to go to Sacchi and forbid the performance. "If you do not do so," he continued, "you will become deservedly an object of hatred to your country; everybody regards you as the author of my misfortunes, and the public

[1] Light is thrown on this paragraph by a passage in Gratarol's *Narr. Apol.*, i. 99. He there says that Signor Maffei had reported Gozzi's great distress at the unexpected effect of his comedy, adding that Sacchi professed his willingness to abandon the play if Gozzi wished it and was able to arrange matters.

is on the point of turning round to take my side against you." I knew that this was unluckily only too probable; but the painful position in which we were both placed had been created, not by my malice, but by his credulity and blundering.

When this oration came to an end, I replied as briefly and as calmly as I could. I began by observing that even if I had the power to stop the play, I should expose myself to the greatest misconceptions. Everybody would believe that it had been suspended by an order from the magistracy in consequence of its libellous character. But that was not the real question at issue. The question was whether I had or had not the power to do this. By a succinct enumeration of all the incidents connected with the revision of the comedy, I proved that neither myself nor Sacchi could interfere with a performance officially commanded and announced for to-morrow evening. Gratarol put in abruptly: "What you are saying is irrelevant and inconsequential. My reasoning has made it certain that you can and ought to stop the play to-morrow and in perpetuity." At this point I begged to remind him that he had recently applied to a supreme tribunal—by his own admission, let drop in the hurry of his cogent reasoning—and that "the door had been shut in his face." It was of little use to argue with Signor Gratarol. To every thing I said he kept exclaiming: "Nonsense, nonsense! You can and must stop the performance."

Wishing to cut matters short, but not without the greatest difficulty, and only by the assistance of Signor Maffei, I got him to listen to the plan I had devised that morning, and read him out my prologue. It was composed in a popular style, and ran as follows:

"*To the Respectable Venetian Public,*

CARLO GOZZI.

"This harmless drama, which hath won the grace
Of your most generous and kind applause,
Large-hearted men of Venice, at the prayers,
Repeated prayers, and not without effect,
Of him who wrote it, now has been withdrawn.
He knows not by what accidents or how,
The various characters, the actors too,
In this plain piece of stage-work, which he took
From an old Spaniard, Tirso da Molina,
Adapting it to our Italian taste,
Have lent themselves to satire, falsely felt,
On living persons whom the author loves.
Scandal, malignant rumours, which abuse
His frank and candid pen, incapable
Of setting snares for names whom all respect,
Have moved him to implore that from to-night
Le Droghe d'Amore shall no longer run:
He meant it for amusement, not offence.
Warm thanks, dictated by his heart, he yields
To you, choice courteous public, who have deigned
To greet so poor a play with your applause;
And promises new works on other themes; and swears
That his sole object is to furnish sport
To you, dear countrymen, and keep your friend."

"Well, well!" cried Gratarol, rising from his chair with a contortion of impatience: "all that is nothing but mere water, water, water! I solemnly reject

GRATAROL'S INTERVIEW WITH GOZZI

Original Etching by Ad. Lalauze

your prologue and your plan.[1] My cogent reasoning upon the merits of the case has proved that you can and must stop the play." On my replying again and again that I was impotent to do so, his brows darkened, and he muttered with eyes wandering all round the room: "I warn you, sir, that if the play comes on the stage to-morrow evening, I shall not value my own life at a brass farthing. Yes, yes, I mean what I am saying; I shall not care for my existence."

The excellent Maffei was sitting all this while in a state of the greatest discomfort and distress. Seeing how pale and wretched he was, I rose to my feet, and addressed Gratarol in these words: "Sir, I do not wish you to part from me under the impression that I am not your friend. All I can undertake is to use my influence by prayers and entreaties to prevent the performance of my comedy. This I promise to do. But I cannot engage to succeed, for I am not the master in this matter. You shall have a full and punctual report of my endeavours. Pray kiss me as a sign that we do not part in enmity." The kiss was exchanged; and what I shall have to relate shortly will enable my readers to judge which of us two gave the kiss of Judas.

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[1] In the *Narr. Apol.* Gratarol gives a different turn to this incident. He does not represent himself as refusing the prologue; and indeed he asserts that on the night of the 17th he was extremely disgusted at not hearing it. See vol. i. p. 114.

LIX.

The several steps I took to meet the wishes of my blind and false antagonist.—History of a long tedious day.

How I spent the rest of the day after this painful scene may be told very briefly. I first sent a letter to the noble gentleman Signor Vendramini, entreating him in courteous but urgent terms to sanction the suspension of the comedy. A polite and distant answer expressing his inability to do so was placed in my hands. Then I hurried to find Sacchi. He was dining at the house of the patrician Giuseppe Lini at S. Samuele. I sent for him into the antechamber, and explained my reasons for having the performance stopped. "What can I do?" exclaimed the *capocomico*. "Have you forgotten that the sublime tribunal has given orders for the play, and that Ricci is going to be brought to the theatre by one of its foot-soldiers? You are demanding the impossible—the ruin of myself and all my company." "But did not you yourself declare," said I, "that you would punctually fulfil my wishes in this matter?" "To whom, and when, and where?" he answered in some heat; "who has told these lies? I should like to be confronted with the man. Do you imagine I am such a donkey as to make ridiculous assertions

of the kind? Nevertheless, if you can smooth away all obstacles, I am willing to submit to your demand."

The noise we were making in the antechamber brought Signor Lini and his guests out of the dining-room. They protested with one voice that it was impossible to withdraw a comedy which was already the property of the public and under the protection of the Government. Gratarol had stirred up all the mischief by fitting the cap on his own head. It was too late to think of the misfortunes he had brought by his own madness on himself.

Furnished with Sacchi's conditional promise, I flew off at once to my friend Maffei. I told him what I had already done, and with what poor success. "Nevertheless," I added, "there is yet another stone which I do not mean to leave unturned. I may find the noble lady Caterina Dolfin Tron at home, if I go to her immediately. She certainly suggested and contrived the travesty which turned Vitalba into a caricature of Gratarol. She has availed herself of the latter's indiscretion and false steps, the excitement of the public, and the dust stirred up about my wretched drama, to wreak her vengeance for what crime against herself I cannot say. Tell Signor Gratarol what I have attempted up to the present moment, and come to meet me under the Procuratie Nuove at three hours after sunset."

The January day in which I had to work was short; and I may parenthetically observe, although

the fact is trivial, that I did not allow myself time to eat a mouthful of food.

It was already an hour and a half past sundown when I turned my steps to the palace of that noble lady. I wished to have a witness of our colloquy, and met with no one on the way more proper for the purpose than Luigi Benedetti, the actor, and Sacchi's nephew. We climbed the long staircase and asked if her ladyship were at home. "Yes," said the servant, "she is receiving a company of ladies, senators, and men of letters." I begged to be announced; and shortly afterwards Mme. Dolfin Tron appeared, closing the doors of her reception-room behind her, from whence there came the sound of animated conversation. She saluted me cheerfully with her usual epithet of *Bear*, bade me take a chair beside her, and motioned to the actor to be seated.[1]

I unfolded the object of my visit in a few sentences, explained how urgently I desired the suppression of my comedy, and described the ineffectual steps which I had taken for securing it. "Now I fling myself upon your powerful assistance, in the earnest hope that you will help me to suspend the performance of the *Droghe d'Amore*."

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[1] Gratarol intimates that Gozzi acted with bad faith in this negotiation, "operando in modo che altri consigliassero a resistere." He calls the meeting at Mme. Tron's "l'infernal conciliabolo [che] si tenne in ora più tarda nelle soglie della regnante Matrona." *Loc. cit.*, p. 114.

"What a request!" she cried: "what has inspired you to make it?" I replied by describing my own bitter annoyance at figuring as the libeller and satirist of private persons. I painted the distress of Gratarol, and the sympathy which I felt for him. "The kindness of your heart is worthy of all honour," she answered; "but if you knew the whole facts, you would not take compassion on that man. He has not merely let himself be bamboozled by an actress, fomented the scandal from which he is now suffering, set himself up against the decrees of the tribunals, calumniated people who deserve respect, pretended that the prima donna's leg was broken, and floundered from stupidity to stupidity until the Government itself is enraged against him. He has not merely committed all these follies. He has done more, of which you are not yet aware."

"I am quite prepared to believe you," I replied; "but in a case like his, any honest man might be excused for losing his head and acting with imprudence. Do not let us think of him. I come to beg you to save me from what I regard as an odious source of humiliation to myself. Signor Gratarol persists in saying that I can and ought to stop the performance of my play." The noble lady looked laughing in my face and said: "Any blind man can see that you have no power over your comedy. You made a gift of it to certain actors. It has been twice revised and licensed by the censors of

the State. It belongs to the public, and the public have the right to profit by it. You will only get yourself into a scrape if you insist on championing the cause of that presumptuous, conceited, and unruly man. If I cannot persuade you, there are senators in that room" (pointing to her drawing-room) "who will tell you plainly that you are impotent—your comedy no longer yours, but the property of the public and the magistrates of State." "All this I know quite well," I answered; "and I have repeated it a hundred times. I cannot stir a finger. This is the very reason why I come to you. I know that you can settle matters if you like. Intelligent people will perhaps understand how helpless I am in the whole matter. But the vulgar and the populace are sure to think otherwise, and I shall be prejudiced in the opinion of my countrymen. It is to your feeling heart that I make this last appeal, beseeching you to liberate me from the purgatory I am in of hearing all these scandals daily, and seeing the unfortunate Gratarol exposed to scorn in a base and cruel pillory." At the end of this speech I bent down, and stooped to the, for me, unwonted abasement of kissing a woman's hand five or six times.

All my entreaties, and even this last act of submission, were of no avail. Madame told me in conclusion that, for reasons which I did not know, the official decree was irreversible. The Ricci would be conducted by an officer of the Council of Ten to the

theatre next evening. After that, the comedy might cease to run; and my protegé Gratarol ought to be well contented with the result of the whole matter. She rose to rejoin her company, and I took my departure with my witness, Benedetti.

This was not, however, the last act for me of that long trying day. I met my best of friends, Maffei, and reported the ill success of my efforts. He undertook to go at once to Gratarol, and tell him that the performance on the 17th was inevitable. He must try to endure his humiliation in silence. On the 18th, and from that night forward, my comedy should never more be seen upon the stage.

Maffei returned, discouraged and annoyed, to inform me that Gratarol still stood by his "cogent and irrefragable demonstrations." "Count Gozzi," he had said, "can and ought to meet my wishes,"—the wishes of his worship. I replied to my friend that I felt sure Gratarol was about to play some awkward trick. We had both involved ourselves in a nasty job, I by undertaking to use my influence in the man's behalf, and Maffei by rendering himself the protector of a maniac whose churlish character was ill adapted to his candid friendship. "Oh, bad, bad!" murmured Maffei between his teeth, downcast and mortified to an extent which moved my sympathy. "Do you perhaps know any person of authority and good sense," I inquired, "who has influence over this lunatic?" "If there is any one," he replied, "I think

we shall discover this person in Gratarol's uncle, Signor Francesco Contarini. This gentleman holds the private affairs of the family, and Gratarol's own disordered fortunes, in his hands. Gratarol can hardly refuse to pay attention to what he says." "I wish I had the good fortune to know Signor Contarini," said I: "that is not my privilege; but if you will introduce me, we may persuade him to open his nephew's eyes to the prudence of accepting the inevitable."

On this suggestion, we repaired at once to Signor Contarini's dwelling at S. Angelo. He received me with politeness, and asked me to explain my errand. I laid the whole matter in its many details before him, and begged him to induce his nephew to accept the only compromise which now was possible. Maffei supported me, corroborated all that I related, and added his own convictions and desires to the same effect.

Signor Contarini acknowledged the cogency of our reasoning, and frankly admitted that I had no power to arrest the performance of my disastrous play. He very courteously offered to go at once to his nephew, and to back us up with his authority, although the hour was late, and it was not his habit to leave the house at night. While preparing himself for the journey, he turned and spoke as follows: "Gentlemen, I am sorry to have to add one observation. We are dealing with a giddy-pated and most obstinate

man. I cannot rely on bringing him to reason. My nephew has undoubted talent; but his head is filled with so many outlandish notions, at variance with the social atmosphere and civil institutions of his native country, that he has been forced, as it were, to incur enmities and to lay himself open to mortifications."

My friend Maffei and I adjourned to a coffee-house in the Calle de' Fabbri or alley of the smiths, called Berizzi, and awaited the result of Signor Contarini's embassy.

When he returned, the report was very different from what I had expected. His manner had changed from affability to an austere and imperious haughtiness. The ultimatum, dictated or commanded by his nephew, ran thus: "On the part of my nephew and myself, I have to tell you that you can and ought to prevent the reappearance of your comedy upon the stage."

I will spare my readers the reply which I found myself obliged to give. It consisted of excuses for having exposed him to so much trouble, and of reiterated assertions that I was powerless to move a finger in the matter. Contarini left us, hard as marble, scarcely deigning to salute me with an inclination of the head.

I almost regretted, at the close of this long weary day, that I had promised to suspend my comedy after its official performance on the 17th. Yet I had

Sacchi's word, solemnly passed on oath, to the effect that he would find some means for putting an end to further annoyances. How he kept it will be seen in the ensuing chapters.

LX.

Gratarol's case against me, which had no foundation in fact or verity.—His chivalrous way of meeting the difficulty, which had arisen between us through his own bad management.

On the evening of the 17th of January, the *Droghe d'Amore* was given again, as strict orders from the Government made necessary. I kept away from the theatre, and passed my time at S. Gio. Grisostomo, where I heard, to my vexation, that S. Salvatore was thronged with spectators. However, I contented myself with thinking that this was the last night of the notorious comedy.

When my servant came to call me next morning, he volunteered this information, much to my astonishment: "Your comedy, sir, is going to be played again to-night at S. Salvatore." "How do you know that?" I asked. "I read the posters just now set up at the Rialto."

While putting on my clothes in haste to see if this had not been some blunder of the bill-stickers, I was

interrupted by the visit of two friends, the patrician Paolo Balbi and Signor Raffaelle Todeschini, a young cittadino of the highest probity. They came to congratulate me on the repetition of my play, which had been called for last evening by an overwhelming and irresistible vote of the audience. On hearing this news, which admitted of no doubt, I felt the blood freeze in my veins.

"You do not know," I said to Signor Balbi, "what sort of fish are stewing in my kettle. I gave my word yesterday that the play should not be repeated. How was I to imagine that my blameless reputation would have to suffer by an actor's breach of faith?" My friends tried to comfort me and soothe me down, while I, oblivious of all the laws of politeness, kept fastening my shoe-buckles, washing my hands, and busying myself about my toilet. I was desperately impatient to get out, and do the utmost in my power to remedy the mischief.

This was my one thought, as the above-named gentlemen can bear me witness, when a new turn was given to affairs by a fresh act of Signor Gratarol's imprudence and vindictive rancour. My servant entered and announced that a footman was waiting outside with a letter which he had orders to deliver into my own hands. I left my room, and found the man there at the top of the staircase. He handed me the letter, and stood waiting for my answer. I saw at a glance, before I opened it, from whom it

came, broke the seal, and read the following missive:[1]

"Sir Count,—Pursuant to the arguments I maintained in your house two mornings ago, the playbill published yesterday entitles me to say that in the whole course of my life I have never met with hypocrisy and imposture equal to yours; and the playbill published this morning proclaims you on the face of it to be no gentleman and a liar.

"Go on, I pray. Satiate your vengeance—vengeance begotten by an amorous passion, in part concealed from the public gaze, possibly not credited by some folk, and which is known to only me in all its real extent. Continue, I say, to rear your masked forehead in the front rank of all those foes who envy, calumniate, persecute, and hate me. To-day it is your turn to laugh. Perhaps this will not always be so. Perhaps the vicissitudes of human life will one day reverse your unworthy triumph and my unmerited oppression.

"From my house, the 18th of January $\frac{1776}{1777}$,

"Pietro Antonio Gratarol."

Having perused this fine flower of Pietro Antonio Gratarol, nobleman of Padua, his eloquence, I folded up the paper, and told the footman, with a smile

[1] This letter is reported in the *Narr. Apol.*, vol. i. p. 123.

which concealed my boiling indignation, and saved him from being kicked down the staircase at the risk of his neck, that he might go back to his master and say that I fully understood the contents of his note.

Returning to the room where I had left Balbi and Todeschini, I put Gratarol's letter into the hands of the former, and said: "Your Excellency will learn from this to what annoyances I am exposed by the recall of my comedy." He turned pale, and so did Todeschini, when they gathered the contents of the cowardly, disgusting document.

Balbi asked me what I meant to do. I replied, putting the last touches to my toilet, that the right thing for me to do would be to compel Sacchi at once to play my comedy every night until the end of the Carnival. "Gratarol's letter has certainly been spread broadcast before now over Venice. I do not mean to give him an answer. What I propose would be the best means of punishing Sacchi for his want of faith—since the theatre will certainly be empty—and Gratarol for his delirious importunity. But, if your Excellency permits me, I shall walk abroad. I should like to let a certain lady, who bolstered up my comedy against my will, and who protected a reckless avaricious comedian—I should like her to see and read in this letter to what she has condemned my peaceable nature, incapable of injuring a fly, by her wrong-headed, whimsical, unbecoming pique against a madman."

While I spoke thus to my friend Balbi, the blood was boiling in my veins. Concealed from him, I had quite other plans in preparation. They were not consistent with philosophy; they were not in agreement with the Gospel. Some time later, but not till many days had passed and these heats had cooled, I recognised and condemned them as wrong and reckless, begotten by the blindness of the natural man deprived of reason for the moment.[1]

Signor Balbi offered to accompany me to the noble lady, Signora Caterina Dolfin Tron; and I was rejoiced to have so excellent a witness of our interview. On presenting ourselves, and being received with her customary gaiety, I contented myself with these few words: "Your Excellencies have been amusing yourselves with the *Droghe d'Amore*, and its recall to the stage. The amusements which fall to my poor share are these." I handed her the letter.

She cast her eyes over the page, and I could read upon her countenance and by the trembling of her hands, how deeply she was moved. It is right for me to add that, strongly as I condemned the revengeful caprice against Signor Gratarol which caused this lady to involve me in a series of revolting annoyances,

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[1] It is amusing to read Gozzi's *Memorie* and Gratarol's *Narrazione* side by side. Gratarol exclaims: "Conte, voi dovete la vita ad un qualche angelo tutelare che benedimmi acciò potessi frenare il cieco impeto," &c. He meditates an *aperta vendetta*, and so forth. *Op. cit.*, pp. 115–117. And yet these two swelling turkey-cocks did not think of fighting a duel.

I felt a thrill of gratitude for the cordial emotions expressed at that moment by her every gesture. I saw that she felt for me. I saw that, although her judgment had been spoiled by a course of unwholesome reading, and by conversation with the vaunted *esprits forts* of our "unprejudiced" age, her heart remained in the right place and uncontaminated.[1]

When she had finished reading, she only said: "Leave this paper in my hands." I obeyed, and took my departure.

It is needless to add that innumerable copies of the precious letter flew about the city. There was not a house, a shop, in which Signor Gratarol's chivalrous proclamation of his rights and wrongs did not form the theme of conversation.

Perhaps I ought to have used circumspection while taking my walks alone about the city, according to my wont. I ought perhaps to have reflected that my antagonist was a man who showed his prowess mainly in ambuscades.[2] But it was never in my nature to know what fear is; and the perils to which I exposed myself while serving in Dalmatia had inured me to ignore it. Therefore, returning to what I hinted some few pages back, I confess that

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[1] Though this is told to his own advantage, Gozzi must have known that he was placing a new weapon in the hands of Gratarol's worst enemy when he consigned to Mme. Tron the letter of defiance.

[2] Gozzi here alludes, I think, to the attack on the actor Vitalba at Milan, which will be related farther on.

my one burning desire, concealed from every friend, was to find myself face to face with the author of that brutal cartel.[1] Day and night, alone and unattended, I prowled around his casino at S. Mosè, nursing this condemnable desire within my breast. Of a truth, I should have been forced to set fire to the house before I drew him from its shelter. That I shall prove; but I was not an incendiary.

Doctor Andrea Comparetti, professor of medicine now in the University of Padua, expressed astonishment when he met me pacing the darkest and the most perilous alleys on the night of that famous 18th of January. He lectured me upon my want of prudence, and reminded me of the circumstances in which I was placed. I laughed the matter off, and he had to leave me with a smile. Let no one imagine, however, that I am boasting of the desire which burned my blood, or that I record my nocturnal wanderings as a sign of heroism. I have never been a gasconading braggart. From a man who could pen a letter like Gratarol's I had to expect some stab in the dark. It was only a blind human weakness which prompted this temerity. I know well enough how to distinguish recklessness from courage.

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[1] Why did he not call Gratarol out? This is very comedian-like.

LXI.

The sequel to Gratarol's missive of defiance.—My personal relations with him cease.

On the morning of the 19th I rose from sleep with a calm mind, and recovered my natural risibility. My ante-chamber was thronged with gentlemen, relatives, and friends, who thought it their duty to pay me respects after the event of yesterday. They were not a little eager to learn how I had been dragged into a mess so much at variance with the well-known tenor of my life. While I was gratifying their excusable curiosity with a candid and humorous account of the whole matter, my brother Gasparo appeared. He brought with him the Senator Paolo Renier, afterwards Doge of Venice,[1] whom I had not hitherto the privilege of knowing.

[1] Paolo Renier was one of the most striking figures in the last years of the Republic. A man of brilliant and versatile abilities, widely read and profoundly instructed by experience of the world, he possessed eloquence so weighty and persuasive that one speech from his lips had power to sway conflicting parties in the State and bring their heated leaders to his lure. (See Romanin, vol. viii. chap. vii., for an extraordinary instance of his oratory.) Yet Renier's character does not inspire respect. Before he became Doge, he had pursued a tortuous course in politics, and had only escaped serious entanglements by his extraordinary intellectual finesse. He married a woman off the stage, who impaired his social credit; and when he appeared as candi-

In compliance with this nobleman's request, I told the whole tale over again. "So then," he said, "make a plain and brief statement in writing of the facts you have described to me. Put it in the form of a memorial to the Supreme Tribunal. Petition to have your honour vindicated. Enclose Gratarol's defamatory letter. Name your witnesses. Add anything you think of use, and bring the whole to me."

I obeyed him blindly; and I do not suppose that any one will be so foolish as to imagine that I departed in one hair's-breadth from the truth while appealing to those awful Three, before the very name of whom the whole town trembles.[1]

The difficulty of narrating a long series of closely connected incidents prevented me from making my memorial as short as I could have wished. Such as it was, I took it, with its appended documents, to Senator Renier. When he had read it through, he

date for the ducal cap, he lavished bribes with cynical shamelessness. Gratarol has penned two pungent pages upon Renier's character, which are worth attention. "Talent and art," he says, "both fail me in describing this man of hundred colours. An intellect of the highest, a heart of the proudest, a face of the most deceptive; such are his component parts. A more fraudulently plausible orator, a more turbulent politician, I have never known. Whether fortune or some charm defends him, he always escapes unhurt from the mortal perils into which he wilfully plunges."—*Op. cit.*, p. 77.

[1] Gozzi publishes a copy of his memorial to the Inquisitors of State. Since the document is long, and repeats what is already known to the readers of his Memoirs, I have not judged it necessary to translate it. The text will be found on pp. 395–399 of the second volume of the *Memorie Inutili.*

said: "I must confess that the tribunal before which this document will appear is not accustomed to peruse compositions of such length. Yet I can find no superfluities which could be omitted. So it will serve its purpose."

What happened to my supplication is utterly unknown to me. I can only say that on the morning of the 23rd of January, while I was still in bed, the same footman who had brought me the letter of the 18th was introduced into my chamber. He handed me a sealed missive, saying: "My master bade me give this note into your own hands." I took it, and read what follows:—

"Sir Count, my most revered friend,—In complete contradiction of the sentiments expressed by me in a letter of some days ago, I beg you to understand by these present, which are in no way different from the sincere esteem and good-will I have entertained for you through many years, that I never meant to offend you; and that, forgetting byegones,[1] I shall continue

[1] Gratarol reports this letter, but expressly states that he was obliged by Signor Zon, secretary to the Inquisitors of State, to omit the words *dimenticando il passato*. His account of how he was compelled to sit down and scribble off the apology, while Zon stood over him, is very amusing. He taught his servant, on delivering the letter into Gozzi's hands, to repeat these words: "el mio paron xè stà comandà de scriverghe sto viglietto." In fact, Gratarol was forced by the supreme authority in Venice to send this apology, and refusal to do so would have involved his immediate imprisonment. According to his own confession, Gratarol, after hearing the ultimatum of the Supreme Tribunal, went to his

to profess toward you the same regard and friendship, in the hope of receiving from you a reciprocation of feeling commensurate with the candour of my declaration.

"From my house, the 23rd of January $\frac{1776}{1777}$.

"Your most devoted servant and friend,

"Pietro Antonio Gratarol."

Folding the paper, I bade the servant carry my respects to his master.

Visitors arrived, and Gratarol's letter of retractation circulated through the city in a score of copies. There was the usual result of tittle-tattle, especially among the idlest and most numerous members of the community.

I repaired to the senator who had espoused my cause, in order to express my thanks and to report

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writing-table and penned the above letter, expressing at the same time his readiness to kiss Count Gozzi's . . . . on the piazza, or to do anything else ridiculous which the Inquisitors might impose upon him. The Republic of S. Mark had reached the last stage of decrepitude, and well deserved to be swept into the lumber-room of bygone greatnesses, when Gratarol's and Gozzi's squabble about a woman and a play brought the machinery of state thus into action. Venice, always an artificial power (in the same sense as the Greek cities of antiquity were artificial), subsisting mainly upon commerce and on the tribute levied from dependencies, had in the eighteenth century dwindled into dotage, through lack of natural resources and revolutions in the world-trade. The rulers of Venice, reduced to insignificance among the powers of Europe, occupied their brains with parochial affairs and the contests of comedians. *Op. cit.*, pp. 130–134.

what had occurred. On hearing that I had received the letter, he replied with gravity: "I am well aware of it." "I was thinking," I continued, "of paying that gentleman a visit. He has been twice to my house; and as I harbour no ill-will against him, and can excuse the errors into which his heated temper drove him, I should like to assure him of my cordiality by a friendly embrace." Signor Renier dissuaded me from taking this course. "You have ability and penetration," he observed, "but you do not sufficiently understand the nature of men puffed up with pride. In case you meet Gratarol, and only if he should be the first to raise his hat, you may return the salute with reserved politeness. Do not extend your civility to words or any inconsiderate demonstrations. A man so perversely proud as he is may stir up new mischief and involve you in further embarrassments. I take it that now the actors will continue to perform your comedy." "I do not know," I answered, "but from what I have heard, the piece has been withdrawn." "Wrong, very wrong!" he rejoined; "that arrogant fellow will try to make it be believed that his retractation was given as an equivalent for the suspension of the performance. They ought at least to put your comedy once more upon the boards, letting the public know that people of importance have bespoken it." I could only answer that, so far as I was concerned, the production, repetition, continued presentations, and suspension of the

play had taken place without my interference. Comedians, I added, only looked to their own pecuniary interests. The senator proceeded to deliver an eloquent and singularly penetrative discourse upon the corruption of the age, and the ill-regulated ways of thinking which had been introduced and widely diffused amongst us. I have never heard this matter handled with more acumen, learning, precision of judgment, logical clearness, breadth of view, and pungent truth. I am speaking only of an elevated mind and ready tongue. I do not pretend to see into the inmost hearts of men.[1]

When I took my leave, I resolved to carry out the recommendations of Signor Renier to the letter. In obedience to this determination, I told Sacchi what he had said about the repetition of my comedy. He replied that he should not have withdrawn it except for the behaviour of Signora Ricci. During the last two evenings she mumbled and gabbled out her part in a way to provoke the audience. Catcalls from the pit and gallery and opprobrious epithets from the boxes were showered upon her; all of which, together with the reproaches of her com-

[1] This reads like a satire upon Renier, whose elevation to the Dogeship was attended with a pomp and profligate expenditure, not to mention a lavish use of bribes, pernicious to all public and private morals. Compare Gratarol's account of an interview he had with Renier (*op. cit.*, p. 79). The man made on Gratarol exactly the same sort of impression by his eloquence, philosophy, urbanity, and learning, mixed with a sense of untrustworthiness, that he did on Gozzi.

rades, she bore with stolid indifference. "Verily," cried I, "Gratarol owes a great deal to that poor woman. For his sake she fell down a staircase, and now she bears the brunt of public outrage! You have done well to stop a comedy which ought to have been damned beyond redemption on the first night."

To wind up the episode of Signor Gratarol, I may say, in conclusion, that I often met him both in Venice and at Padua. To his credit let it be spoken, that he never stooped one inch from the high perch of his incorrigible haughtiness. His hat stuck to that cage of cockchafers he called his head, as though it had been nailed there. Mindful of the advice I had received, and which amounted to a command, I refrained from bowing. I should have liked to be on good terms with him, and felt uncomfortable at the rudeness I was bound to display. Had he drawn his sword upon me, I could have understood that his retractation had been forced. But there was nothing in his stupid inurbanity to justify this supposition. Who could have divined that he was planning a flight to Stockholm, and that he would draw his sword upon me there and stab me with words, while I remained at Venice?

LXII.

A tragic accident, with a happy termination.

A few months after these occurrences, my brother Gasparo, who had fallen ill of too much study and harassing cares, went to Padua to consult the physicians of that famous university. Though we no longer shared the same home, and had divided our patrimony, I always regarded him as my friend and master. The news I received of his sad state of health, which declined from bad to worse, in spite of the most skilful medical assistance, caused me the gravest uneasiness.

One morning a gondolier in the service of Mme. Dolfin-Tron brought me a letter which she had received from Professor Giovanni Marsili at Padua, together with a note from his mistress. The note urgently begged me to repair to her at once. The letter contained news of far more serious import. From it I learned that my poor brother, whether oppressed by dark and melancholical phantasies, or by the delirium of a burning fever which attacked him, had thrown himself in a fit of exaltation from a window into the Brenta. He had fallen with his chest upon a great stone; and though he had been brought alive out of the river, he was speechless, spat

blood continually, and lay insensible, plunged in profound lethargy, and consumed with a mortal fever, which left but little hope of his survival.

In spite of my philosophy, the reading of this letter well-nigh deprived me of my wits, and I ran in a state of distraction to that noble lady. I found her stretched upon a sofa, drowned in tears. No sooner did she cast eyes upon me than she rose, and rushed into my arms upon the point of fainting. "Dear friend," she sobbed out, as soon as she found power to speak, "go to Padua at once; save my father for me, save my father!"[1] Then she fell back upon the sofa and shed a torrent of tears.

What though I needed comfort myself, I strove to comfort her affliction, by promising to go upon the spot to Padua, and by reminding her that my brother's case might not be so desperate as was supposed.

I shall not describe my hurried journey. At Fusina I ran up against Count Carlo di Coloredo, who asked me with much sweetness of manner whether there was anything astir in Venice. I believe that I brutally said "Nothing," as I jumped into a carriage and departed. The gloomy anticipation of finding my poor brother a corpse grew upon me with increasing strength as I approached the walls of Padua, shutting out the sense of water, earth, trees, animals, and men upon that doleful journey.

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[1] See above, p. 267. Mme. Tron called Gasparo *Father* and Carlo *Bear*.

When I arrived, I alighted at my friend Innocenzio Massimo's hospitable dwelling, and was received, as always, with open arms. Sadness was written on the faces of all his family. I hardly dared to inquire after my brother; and when I summoned courage to do so, I was told that he was yet alive, but in a state which left too little hope.

I repaired at once to his lodgings in the Prato della Valle. There I found Mme. Jeanne Sarah Cenet, a Frenchwoman of some five-and-fifty years, mere skin and bones, who was attending unremittingly to the invalid, half-mad herself with grief and tears and watching. She gave me a detailed account of my brother's condition. He lay there, a scarcely breathing corpse, afflicted with continuous fever, incapable of speech, taking no nourishment, and barely swallowing a few drops of water. The hæmoptysis had ceased, and the expectoration was only tinged with blood.

I asked what doctor was attending him. She replied that there were four. Without questioning their ability, I was terrified at the number of them. Then she added that a fifth physician, the celebrated Professor della Bona, had been called into one consultation. He had suggested certain remedies, which the other four doctors rejected as frivolities, and none of them had been employed. "Very well!" said I.

At this point they came to tell me that the invalid,

on hearing my voice from his bedroom, had opened his eyes and spoken these words very faintly: "My brother Charles!" I went to him and tried to rouse him. Drowned in his lethargy, he made no answer; but I thought I could detect upon his face some spark of relief.

One of the four doctors boasted of having restored my brother to life when he was taken from the river, by using the methods prescribed by the Magistrates of Public Health for the resuscitation of drowned persons. I went to offer this man an honorarium, and found him surrounded by his witnesses, engaged in drawing up a memorial to the Magistrates of Health. It set forth the prodigious energy with which he, the doctor, had successfully employed their methods on the person of Count Gasparo Gozzi, and wound up with an energetic petition for the golden medal awarded in such circumstances to the operator. He was anxious to relate the whole event, to enlarge upon his merits, and to read aloud his eloquent memorial. I begged him to spare me what could only torture an afflicted fancy with fresh images of sorrow. Then I placed some sequins in his hand, and left him to the elaboration of his petition. Afterwards, I heard that he had received the medal, and I bore no grudge against the needy expeditious son of science.

My brother passed some days and nights between life and death, in his deep lethargy and ardent fever, without taking nourishment. Mme. Cenet used to

force open his jaws and insinuate little balls of butter between his teeth in a coffee-spoon. This was all the food he had, licking the spoon and swallowing the butter without consciousness. The four doctors came to see him twice a day very kindly, for they had all been urgently besought to do so by Mme. Dolfin Tron. They looked at the water, examined the expectoration, felt the pulse, affirmed that it was a mortal fever, shrugged their shoulders, and went away again.

The anxious thoughts which weighed upon my mind, fatiguing cares for the sick man, errands I had to run, and the great heat of the season, contributed to tax my strength. But, in addition, I had to carry on a voluminous correspondence daily with Venice, writing long letters to Mme. Dolfin Tron, to the secretary of the Riformatori di Padova,[1] and to other persons. My brother held an office under the Riformatori, which brought him in seven or eight hundred ducats a year. One day I received a pressing letter from the noble lady above mentioned, informing me that many applicants were already intriguing and canvassing for this post, in the expectation of my brother's death. Her husband, who presided at the board, and herself were both of opinion that I ought to apply in writing for the

[1] The Riformatori dello Studio di Padova were three noblemen of Venice, who controlled the university in that city and other educational establishments belonging to the State.

office. She guaranteed my unopposed election if I did so.

Instead of relieving my mind, this letter only added to my sadness. I answered that I was grateful for the counsels she had given, and for her generous promises; but she ought to know my temper, and to remember that I had refused to compete for the far more important and lucrative office of Master of the Posts to Vienna, which she had recommended, and for which she had engaged the influence of her powerful consort. I had undertaken heavy charges for the sake of my family, but I did not care to burden my shoulders with affairs which involved public responsibility. I had neither wife nor children, was averse to taking place among the great, disliked the ceremonies and observances which office necessitates, did not want to become rich, and was satisfied with my moderate estate. To see my brother in health again, I would willingly strip myself to my shirt of all that I possessed: but I civilly declined the offer which she generously made.

This called forth an answer, in which the lady treated me as a Quixotic hero of romance. She insisted that I should send in a petition for the office, and repeated that various applicants were moving heaven and earth to secure the reversion of it. In conclusion, she told me that I was in duty bound to accept a post of emolument which would enable me to assist my brother's family.

Here I detected the real motive which urged her to make me assume the part of candidate against my inclination. I was embittered when I remembered how much I had already done for more than thirty years to protect the interests of my kindred, prosecuting their lawsuits, paying off their debts, and fighting their battles with a host of litigious claimants. Now, forsooth, I was to be goaded into dragging the chain of an onerous and troublesome office, for which I felt myself entirely unfit.

I replied that no pricks of conscience with regard to my brother's family impelled me to seek what I neither desired nor deserved. If an application were made in my name (for I well knew that my sister-in-law was capable of taking such a step), I should feel myself obliged to utter a protest. Here I was at Padua, ready to spend my blood for my brother. If he survived, by the favour of God, I hoped that the Riformatori would not deprive him of his post. If he died, to my infinite sorrow, the tribunal would be able to award it to some fitting person, who deserved it more than I did.

I hoped to be delivered from this well-meant tyranny. But such was not the case. Doctor Bartolommeo Bevilacqua, rector of the public schools of Venice, and my good friend, arrived at Padua. He had been sent off post-haste by the lady to persuade me into taking the step which she thought it a folly to refuse. I repeated all that I had previously urged,

and declared that my mind was made up to accept no office under any magistracy. I meant to remain a peace-loving madman to the end. Perhaps I shall be condemned for the repugnance I have always felt to becoming the slave of great folk and public interests; but this point in my character is fixed and ineradicable. I may add that the result of these negotiations was to free me from the pertinacious patronage against which I rebelled with my whole nature.

Under these various anxieties and the heat of the season my health gave away. I was seized with a violent fever, which confined me to bed for three days. During that time the news which I received about my brother grew always worse and worse. When I was able to leave my room, I went to Mme. Cenet. She told me that a priest had been summoned to assist him in his passage from this world. Two of the doctors, on examining his expectoration, found that it consisted of pure matter. They concluded that the lungs, bruised by his fall, had begun to gangrene, and that he had only a few hours to live. I asked whether Professor della Bona had repeated his visit. She answered, No. Happening just then to catch sight of that eminent physician passing along the Prato della Valle, I ran out, and besought him to come up and give a look at my poor dying brother. He willingly complied; and on the way I told him what the doctors had discovered.

At this point I am obliged to exchange the tragic tone for comic humour, and shall perhaps appear satirical against my will.

The worthy professor listened attentively a long time to my brother's breathing. Then he said: "The respiration is certainly weak, but unimpeded. There can be no question of gangrene. Where is that purulent expectoration?" We brought him the vessel, which he inspected closely, and laid aside with these words: "There is no pus there; it is only butter." And so it was. The butter which Mme. Cenet administered had been spat up from time to time by the patient. "Our invalid," continued the physician, "is dying of nothing else but an acute fever. Has he drunk the manna-water I recommended, and have you made the injections of quinine!" Mme. Cenet answered that these remedies had not been used, because the other doctors disapproved of them. "Fine!" he replied. "What was the object then of calling me in? I am not accustomed to play the part of Truffaldino." Turning to me, he added: "Your brother's life hangs upon a thread. I cannot answer for it in the state of extreme weakness to which he is reduced. Yet, though the case looks desperate, follow my prescriptions, and repeat them frequently."

I begged him not to abandon the sick man, and superintended the treatment he had ordered. Gradually the fever abated. My brother opened his

eyes, and began to utter a few words. He took small quantities of stronger food, and swallowed moderate doses of quinine. Then arrived a terrible crisis. His whole alimentary canal, from the œsophagus to the rectum, was covered with those ulcers which medical men call *apthæ*. Professor Della Bona regarded this as very serious. But in a few days my brother regained strength, sat up in bed, and joked with the doctor. Then, at the end of another period, he left his couch, ate with appetite, and composed some sonnets. His health, undermined by study, misfortunes, advanced age, and a mortal illness, was now in as good a state as could be expected under the circumstances.

Seeing him thus re-established, I was able to leave Padua. But I ought to add, that when I went to express my heartfelt thanks to Professor Della Bona, and to press a fee upon him, that generous and benevolent man refused to accept anything. He was paid enough, he said, by the recovery of one whom he prized as a friend; not to speak of the obligations which he owed to the great lady who had recommended my brother to his care.

LXIII.

Once more about the "Droghe d'Amore."—I leave my readers to decide upon the truth of my narration.—Final dissolution of Sacchi's company.—Sacchi leaves Venice for ever.

In this chapter I shall wind up the history of my comedy *Le Droghe d'Amore*, and relate the termination of my long connection with Sacchi's company of actors.

Sacchi, who had proceeded on his summer tour to Milan, thought fit to exhibit the notorious play in that city. Although it could not win the *succès de scandale* which made it so profitable to his pocket at Venice, the performance gave rise to fresh prepossessions against Signor Gratarol.

News reached Venice that the actor Giovanni Vitalba, who played the too famous part of Don Adone, had been assaulted by a ruffian one night, going to or returning from the theatre. The fellow flung a huge bottle of ink full in his face, with the object of spoiling his beauty. Fortunately for Vitalba, the bottle, which was hurled with force enough to smash his skull, hit him on the thickly-wadded collar of his coat. To this circumstance he

owed his escape from injury or death, designed by the abominable malice of some unknown ill-wisher.

The peaceable character of this poor comedian, who lived retired and economically, earning his bread upon the stage, and implicitly obeying Sacchi's orders, was so well known that no one suspected the hand of a private enemy. Suspicion fell not unnaturally upon Gratarol. For myself, I may say with candour that I did not lend my mind to the gossip which disturbed the town; but it is certain that this act of violence inflamed Gratarol's political adversaries, and made them remorseless when he applied for the ratification of his appointment to the embassy at Naples.[1]

On my brother's return to Venice, I begged him to speak as warmly as he could in Gratarol's behalf to the Procuratore Tron and his all-powerful lady. Everybody knew that Gratarol was expecting a decree of the Senate granting him some thousands of ducats for the expenses of his outfit; it was also asserted that, having received the usual allowance for an embassy to Turin, which he had not been able to employ upon that mission, his enemies intended to make this a reason for cancelling his appointment to Naples. I thought it therefore worth while to engage Gasparo's influence with that noble couple

[1] Gratarol indignantly denies that he had anything to do with this attack upon Vitalba, and says he was at Vienna when it happened. *Op. cit.*, p. 178.

for the benefit of my would-be foe and rival in his present difficulty. What Gratarol may think about my intervention, it is impossible for me to imagine. Not improbably he will stigmatise it as an act of officious hypocrisy. Yet I am certain that it was sincerely and cordially meant to serve him.

My brother punctually discharged his mission, and returned with a verbal answer from the Procuratessa and her husband, to the effect that "insuperable obstacles lay in the way of sending the Secretary to the Court of Naples; Pietro Antonio Gratarol cannot and will not go; the best course for him to take is to send in his resignation." That was the ostensible pith of their reply; but the gist, if gist it was, lurked from sight in a cloud of political and economical considerations, anecdotes about Gratarol's ways of life and fortune, personalities, piques, private spites, and evidences of an unbecoming and vulgar will to trample on him. I do not intend to expose myself to the charge of evil intentions by setting down Mme. Dolfin Tron's malicious ultimatum in full here. I wrote it out, however, and have kept the memorandum among the papers locked up in my desk, whence I hope that no one will have the wish to drag it forth and read it.

Gratarol, at the close of these transactions, finding himself disfavoured by the Senate, did not take the prudent course of sending in his resignation and lying by for a better turn of affairs, such as is always to be looked for in a government like ours of

LEANDRE

Illustrating the Italian Commedia dell' Arte, or Impromptu Comedy

Venice. On the contrary, he flung out with all the violence of his headstrong and indomitable temper. He left the country in a rage, exposing himself and his relatives to the thunderbolts which were hurled upon him, partly by the mechanical operation of our laws, but also by the force of a rapacious and inhuman tyranny.

I shall not enlarge upon what followed after Gratarol's flight to foreign lands. These circumstances, disastrous to himself and prejudicial to the enemies he left behind him, are only too fresh in the memory of men. But I may indulge in one philosopher's reflection. The man was said to be, in spite of his many profligacies and excesses, gifted with exuberant health and physical vigour. Considering his mental parts and moral qualities, it is a pity that he did not suffer from a tertian or a quartan fever, the headache, the colic, or peradventure piles. Handicapped in this salutary way, he might have continued to be a prosperous and able servant of the State. So true is it that men often find the faculty on which they most pride themselves their worst stumbling-block in life!

After Signor Gratarol's departure to the frozen North, I felt strongly inclined to have done, at once and for ever, with my lucubrations for the stage. Friends, however, pointed out that a sudden retirement from the pastime of many previous years would expose me to malignant comments. Accord-

ingly, I completed two plays which I had already planned—*Il Metafisico* and *Bianca Contessa di Melfi*—giving them to Sacchi in exchange for the autograph and all the copies of my now too notorious *Droghe d'Amore*. Those manuscripts I locked up in my escritoire, vowing that the comedy should never see the footlights of a theatre again.

It will not be impertinent, as I have touched upon these stage-affairs, to relate the dissolution of Sacchi's company in detail.

I had patronised my friends with heroico-comical perseverance for a quarter of a century. The time now came for me to part with them. Sacchi himself, aged in years, was falling rapidly to pieces. Absurd octogenarian love-affairs completed the ruin of his dotage. His daughter, who not unreasonably expected to inherit money, plate, and jewels of considerable value, never ceased inveighing against her father's anachronistic fondnesses. These invectives reached his ears, and exasperated a naturally irritable temper. Meanwhile, his partners in the company resented the despotism with which he claimed to rule the roast and use their common purse for benefactions to his mistresses. Detected in these private foibles, yet far from being taught the error of his ways, old Sacchi became a kind of demon. He never opened his lips without insulting his daughter, his partners, and the whole troupe. I do not expect my reader to imagine that their replies

were sweetmeats. Discord ruled in every hall and chamber of this house of actors. It came to drawing swords and knives; and bloodshed was only obviated by the bodily intervention of bystanders.

I felt that the moment had come to take my leave. With this in view, I packed up a bundle of Spanish books lent to me by Sacchi and returned them. But things had gone too far to be remedied by hints and intimations. Petronio Zanerini, the best actor of Italy; Domenico Barsanti, a very able artist; Luigi Benedetti and his wife, both of them useful for all ordinary purposes; Agostino Fiorelli, stupendous in the rôle of Tartaglia; each and every one of these retired in disgust and took engagements with rival companies. Sacchi's eccentricities had reduced his troupe to a mere skeleton. Finally, the patrician who owned S. Salvatore, scenting disaster in the air, gave the lease of his theatre to another set of players.

I took certain steps at this juncture to keep what remained of the company together and to heal its breaches. Through my mediation Atanagio Zannoni, a splendid actor, an excellent fellow, and Sacchi's brother-in-law, consented to hold on upon the understanding that Sacchi should execute a deed according his partners their just share in the management. The document was drawn up and signed. Sacchi cursed and swore while signing; and Zannoni told me that it would prove waste paper, as indeed it did.

Patched up in this way, the company removed to the

theatre of S. Angelo, which had been their old quarters before I succeeded in transferring them to S. Salvatore. They were scarce of money, scarce of actors, and the few actors they had were people of no talent. Two pieces I composed for them, *Cimene Pardo* and *La Figlia dell' Aria*, could not be put upon the stage for want of funds and proper players to sustain the parts. I had eventually to give these dramas to two different companies. The history of one of them, *Cimene Pardo*, brings my old friend and gossip, Teodora Ricci, once more upon the scene; but I do not think that I should interest my readers by relating it.[1]

Suffice it to say, that everything went daily from bad to worse with Sacchi's troupe. He did not improve in temper. Receipts dwindled. The paid actors had to recover their salaries by suits at law, and left the company. Nothing was heard but outcries, lamentations, mutual reproaches, threats, complaints, demands for money, talks about executions, writs, and stamped papers from the courts. At last, after two years of this infernal squabbling, a troupe which had been the terror of its rivals and the delight of our theatres broke up in pitiable confusion.

Sacchi, on the point of setting out for Genoa, came to visit me, and spoke as follows, shedding tears thereby. I rememember his precise words: "You

[1] Gozzi has, in fact, told the story of Mme. Ricci's return to Venice, but it is without importance.

are the only friend on whom I mean to call before I leave Venice secretly and with sorrow for ever. I shall never forget the benefits you have heaped upon me. You alone have told me the truth with candour. Do not deny me the favour of a kiss at parting, the favour of your pardon, and of your compassion."

I gave him the kiss he asked for. He left me weeping; and I—I am bound to say it—remained not less affected at the closing of this long and once so happy chapter in my life.[1]

After that moment I laid my pen down, and never again resumed it for dramatic composition.

LXIV.

We cannot always go on laughing.—Deaths of friends.—Dissolution of the old Republic of S. Mark.—I lay my pen down on the 18th of March 1798.

As years advanced, it came to me, as it comes to all, to be reminded that we cannot go on always laughing. One Sunday I was hearing mass in the Church of S. Moisè, when a friend came up and asked me in a whisper whether I had heard of the

[1] Sacchi, the last great representative of the *Commedia dell' Arte*, was a Ferrarese, born at Vienna in 1708. After leaving Venice he sank into poverty, and died at sea in 1788 between Genoa and Marseilles. His body was committed to the waters.

fatal accident to the patrician Paolo Balbi. "What accident?" I said with consternation. "Last night he died," was the reply. "What!" exclaimed I, still more terrified: "why, I was with him three hours yesterday evening; he was in perfect health and spirits." "Nevertheless," said my informant, "the poor gentleman is dead. Excuse me if I have been the bearer of disastrous news." When the mass, to which I listened without listening, was over, I ran to the patrician's house. I cherished warm affection for this friend of many years, and hoped against hope that the news might be false. Alas! the house resounded with funeral lamentations; the widow and children had already left it for the palace of their relatives, the Malipieri.

Not many days afterwards I received the sad announcement that my brother Francesco was seriously ill of a kind of cachexy on his estate in Friuli. A few days later I learned that he had breathed his last. The poor fellow left his wife and three sons well provided for; but when the salutary restraint of his authority was removed by death, they showed every inclination to dissipate what he had brought together for their comfort.

One morning my friend Raffaelle Todeschini was announced. His countenance wore an expression of alarm, while he began: "I come to bring you painful news. Last evening, in the coffee-house at the Ponte dell' Angelo, that honourable gentleman,

Carlo Maffei, died suddenly." The blow fell heavy on my heart; for I have enjoyed few friendships equal to that of this most excellent gentleman. In his will he mentioned me in terms of the highest and most unmerited praise, bequeathing me his gold snuff-box by way of remembrance. That was the one and only legacy which fell to my share in the course of my whole life.

In a short period of time I lost successively several other relatives and friends. My brother Gasparo expired at Padua, recommending his second wife, the Mme. Cenet who had nursed him through his long illness, to my care. A sudden stroke of apoplexy robbed me of the first and faithfullest friend I ever had, Innocenzio Massimo. My sister Laura, who was married and lived at Adria, passed away while yet in the prime of womanhood. I could add other names to this funereal catalogue, if I were not unwilling to detain my readers longer in the graveyard.

Meanwhile, a terrible attack of fever laid me low in my turn. The physician, Giorgio Cornaro, a man of the highest probity and candour, who showed a vigilant affection for his patients, came at once to visit me. The intense pains I suffered during the following night, and the excessive fierceness with which the fever renewed its assaults, made me feel that I was about to follow my relatives and friends to the tomb. I waited through those sombre hours; but when I heard my servant stirring, I sent him for

a confessor. The man refused at first, and had to be dispatched upon his errand by a voice more worthy of a cut-throat than a penitent. While I was confessing, Dr. Cornaro entered. He inquired what I had been about, and I replied that I did not think it amiss to be prepared beforehand. "I felt sufficiently ill to fulfil the duties of a Catholic upon his death-bed, and have saved you the trouble of breaking the news to me in case of necessity." "Very well," said he, feeling my pulse and frowning. "We must cut short this fever with quinine, before it reaches the third assault. It is a violent attack of the sort we call pernicious." How many pounds of the drug I swallowed is unknown to me. I only remember that they brought me a large glassful every two hours. The fever abated; but I had to drag through three months of a slow and painful convalescence.

But now it is time to close these Memoirs. The publisher, Palese, informs me that the third volume will be more than large enough. I lay my pen aside just at the moment when I should have had to describe that vast undulation called the French Revolution, which swept over Europe, upsetting kingdoms and drowning the landmarks of immemorial history. This awful typhoon caught Venice in its gyration, affording a splendidly hideous field for philosophical reflection. "Splendidly hideous" is a contradiction in terms; but at the period in

which we are living paradoxes have become classical.

The sweet delusive dream of a democracy, organised and based on irremovable foundations—the expectation of a moral impossibility—made men howl and laugh and dance and weep together. The ululations of the dreamers, yelling out *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, deafened our ears; and those of us who still remained awake were forced to feign themselves dreamers, in order to protect their honour, their property, their lives. People who are not accustomed to trace the inevitable effects of doctrines propagated through the centuries see only mysteries and prodigies in convulsions of this kind. The whole tenor of my writings, on the other hand, and particularly my poem *Marfisa bizzarra*, which conceals philosophy beneath the mantle of burlesque humour, prove that I was keenly alive to the disastrous results which had to be expected from revolutionary science sown broadcast during the past age. I always dreaded and predicted a cataclysm as the natural consequence of those pernicious doctrines. Yet my Cassandra warnings were doomed to remain as useless as these Memoirs will certainly be—as ineffectual as a doctor's prescriptions for a man whose lungs are rotten. The sweet delusive dream of our physically impossible democracy will end in the evolution of . . . .

But Palese calls on me to staunch this flow of ink upon the paper. Let us leave to serious and

candid historians the task of relating what we are sure, if we live, to see.

To-day is the 18th of March in the year 1798; and here I lay my pen down, lest I injure my good publisher. Farewell, patient and benign readers of my useless Memoirs!

LXV.

SEQUEL TO GOZZI'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

SUPPLIED BY THE TRANSLATOR.

Gozzi broke off his Memoirs on the 18th of March 1798. He lived another eight years, and died upon the 4th of April 1806, aged eighty-six. On reviewing his life, we find four clearly marked periods. The first ends with the death of his father in 1745, and includes his three years' service in Dalmatia. The second closes with the year 1756, and is marked by the break-up of the Gozzi family and his engagement in those litigations and affairs of business which formed his real occupation for a long series of years. Short as was this second period, it gave a decisive tone to his character by confirming the man's natural obstinacy and litigiousness. Undoubtedly it was not for nothing that he frequented the Venetian law-courts and studied the

arts of chicanery. In all his polemical writings we detect the habit of forensic warfare, the wariness of an experienced pleader, and the licensed plausibility of one who is accustomed to conceal the weak points in his own case while magnifying the shortcomings of his adversary. His unremitting attention to practical matters made him an experienced man of business. This was the true Carlo Gozzi; not that fantastic dreamy plaything of the sprites and fairies which his romantic French and German critics have discerned in the author of the *Fiabe*. At the same time, during this second period, he never neglected literature, but went on writing in the intervals of serious affairs. Self-taught, well-nigh devoid of systematic culture in history, philosophy, and language, but gifted with a sincere admiration for the best Italian authors, with an active fancy and a natural bias for burlesque humour, he formed that peculiar manner, at once prolix and forcible, effective and slovenly, which distinguishes his published works. Unequal in style, incorrect in diction, incapable of giving perfect form or polish to his compositions, he nevertheless posed as a purist and threw himself with passion as a conservative into the literary polemics of his day. The Accademia Granellesca, founded at the close of this period, recognised in him its stoutest champion and most quarrelsome fore-fighter. I have mentioned the year 1756 as the date which opens the third period in Gozzi's life. It marks the publication of his

Tartana degli Influssi and the return of Sacchi's company to Venice. This period terminates in 1781, and includes all that was most memorable in his career—the quarrel with Goldoni and Chiari, the alliance with Sacchi, the composition of the *Fiabe* and twenty-three plays on Spanish subjects, the liaison with Teodora Ricci, and the episode of Gratarol. Gozzi was past sixty when Sacchi's company broke up, and Gratarol's misfortunes threw a gloomy light upon his past theatrical career. The fourth period of seventeen years is distinguished by little literary activity. Yet we owe to it the *Memorie Inutili*, which were professedly written as an answer to Gratarol's *Narrazione Apologetica*. Partly composed in 1780, but suppressed by order of the Government, they did not see the light until the year 1797–98, when Gozzi completed the work and sent it in a hurry to the press. Meanwhile the Republic of S. Mark had fallen, never to rise again. In the midst of this political earthquake, Gozzi retained his old aristocratic principles intact, though he bowed to custom and used the shibboleths of the French Revolution, as he confesses, with conscious cynicism.[1] The period of old age was passed in comparative solitude, cheered, however, by the friendly relations which he maintained with the

[1] Compare the pregnant phrase at the close of the *Memorie* (vol. iii. p. 290; translation, above, p. 329) with the tone of the *Manifesto* and the address *A' suoi amati concittadini* (vol. i. pp. 3–15 and iii.–xv.), and the close of the *Ragionamento del cittadino Carlo Gozzi*, vol. ii. p. xvii.

surviving members of his family. The cycle of his dramatic works was closed; and after 1782 he had the mortification of seeing his *Fiabe* neglected, while Goldoni's star reascended the firmament of popularity and fame. Indeed, the *Fiabe* had no chance of surviving the improvised style of comedy, to support which Gozzi composed them, and which he fondly imagined immortal. Goethe, in 1788, was present at a performance given by the last débris of Sacchi's company; but when the old *Commedia dell' Arte* and the old actors died out, the *Fiabe* were relegated to marionettes and puppet-shows. The poet and the man of letters dwindled in Gozzi, but the man of business survived. His correspondence during this fourth period shows him engaged in various commercial affairs upon a small scale, minute in his accounts, involved in litigation, attentive to the produce of his farms, busied about the interests of friends, trafficking in lace and stuffs, groceries, wine, fowls, and carriages.[1] This forms a curious contrast to the romantic portrait of the old man vamped up for us by Paul de Musset. The ordinary troubles of advanced age—rheums, aches, and infirmities—fell upon him. In one of his letters to Innocenzio Massimo he describes their correspondence as "a hypochondriacal gazette." On the 13th of February 1804 he signed a holographic will, which shows him still loyal to his

[1] See Masi's Essay, *Fiabe*, vol. i. p. clxxxix.; Malamanni, *Nuova Rivista di Torino*, Nos. lviii.-x.

conservative creed in religion, politics, philosophy, and morals. At this time he appears to have been living in the Campo S. Angelo, one of the broadest, busiest, and sunniest squares of Venice. Indeed, he had quitted the ancestral palace of the Gozzi at S. Cassiano many years before, finding it too distant from the theatres and the piazza. For a long while he occupied a casino alone in the Calle Lunga S. Moisè. The little dwelling belonged to him; and in a passage of his Memoirs, which did not lend itself to the scheme of my translation, he relates the circumstances of his removal to this habitation.[1] I shall insert it here, because it throws light upon the last stage of Gozzi's journey in this world. "Many years," he says, "had passed away since my brothers Francesco and Almorò with their families were established in Friuli, while I remained at Venice, the sole occupant of our paternal mansion. For me alone, the vast place was like a wilderness. In the winter I shivered with cold there. Snow, rain, and the Rialto caused me innumerable annoyances when I left the theatres at night to gain my distant home. I was growing old, and this made the journey seem each year more irksome. A casino which I owned in the quarter of S. Maria Zobenigo, Calle Lunga S. Moisè, not far from S. Marco, had been let for sixty ducats a year to the majordomo of a Venetian nobleman. This man left Venice with his master on an

[1] *Memorie*, vol. iii. ch. vii.

embassy, giving me no notice that he had sold his furniture and handed over my casino to the mistress of some man about the town. By a series of similar changes, the tenement passed successively through the hands of several women of the same sort. I always got the rent and asked no questions. The best of it was that the money was punctually paid me by priests, who uttered panegyrics on the heroism of my female tenants. The last of these heroines sent to tell me that my house needed certain repairs. Accordingly I went there, and was received by a well-restored relic of womanhood, who pointed out the alterations she judged necessary in her dwelling-place. Casting my eyes over the lodgings, I thought that they would serve my purpose admirably, and told the lady so. In a moment she changed her honeyed tone and language of affected flattery to oaths and threats and declarations that nothing in the world would make her turn out. I phlegmatically remarked that she had no lease, that my lessee had no power to sublet, and that I would grant her sufficient time to seek another nest. In such matters, as is well known to readers of these Memoirs, I have always had some trouble. But at last, by taking over certain pieces of damaged furniture, I came to terms with the Nymph of Cocytus, and installed myself in my casino. I did it up, and stayed there fourteen years, letting on lease my former abode at S. Cassiano. I should have been there still, had not

my brother Almorò written to say that he was tired of Friuli. A widower, with a son and daughter, he should like to send the former to the university at Padua, and to make a home with me in Venice. I was always ready to oblige my brother, and this casino could not hold us all. Accordingly, we took a larger house at S. Benedetto ; and here my brother, much aged in my eyes, as I must probably have seemed in his, came to live with me. His children, whom I had only known as little creatures, had grown into giants. Before a year was over, the daughter made a good match in Friuli, and the son went to Padua, whence the troubles of the Revolution drove him away before he had obtained the laurels of a doctor's degree. In that commotion the laurel, destined for the brows of students, was consecrated to the kitchen and the garnishing of dishes on the table." [1]

It is possible that the marriage of this niece and the subsequent marriage of his nephew broke up the joint-household at S. Benedetto, and that Gozzi then removed to the neighbouring quarter of S. Angelo.[2]

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[1] If I wished to comment on Gozzi's humour—subrisive, slightly bitter, acid and yet genial, preserving the main points of humane feeling intact, scoffing at revolutions in politics and fashion—I should select the above-translated passage as combining its essential qualities, together with something of the man's graphic power of description.

[2] The matter is not of importance. But when Gozzi speaks of a house at S. Benedetto, he probably means the Campo di S. Angelo. Part at least of that Campo is in the parish of S. Benedetto.

Almorò and his son Gasparo were appointed executors to Carlo Gozzi's will, which winds up with the following characteristic admonition to the young man: "Preserve your affection for your well-bred, well-behaved, and excellent wife. Look to the careful education of your children, and protect them from the false maxims of that sophistic science which is the bane of our age, involving all humanity in disastrous mists of error and confusion, in labyrinths of infelicity and misery." Gozzi died on the 4th of April 1806, and was buried in the church of S. Cassiano.

PIETRO LONGHI,

The Painter of Venetian Society during the Period of Gozzi and Goldoni.[1]

I.

The eighteenth century was marked in Venice by a partial revival of the art of painting. Four contemporary masters — Tiepolo, Canaletti, Longhi, and Guardi—have left abundance of meritorious work, which illustrates the taste and manners of society, shows how men and women dressed and moved and took their pastime in the City of the Waters, and

[1] I wrote this essay on Longhi at a time when I hoped to be able to illustrate my work on Gozzi profusely from the painter's sketch-book. This scheme had to be abandoned owing to difficulties connected with the proper reproduction of Longhi's drawings by photography. But should any of my readers be interested in the details of Gozzi's life, I counsel them to make a careful study of Longhi's works at Venice, and more especially of the deeply-interesting sketch-book at the Museo Civico. Those who can read between the lines of original drawings will find this book a real assistance toward the understanding of Venetian society in the last century. The moral purity and the moderation of the artist give value to his transcripts from the life he saw around him.

preserves for us the external features of Venice during the last hundred years of the Republic.[1]

As an artist, Tiepolo was undoubtedly the strongest of these four. In him alone we recognise a genius of the first order, who, had he been born in the great age of Italian painting, might have disputed the palm with men like Tintoretto. His frescoes in the Palazzo Labia, representing the embarkation of Antony and Cleopatra on the Cydnus, and their famous banquet at Canopus, are worthy to be classed with the finest decorative work of Paolo Veronese. Indeed, the sense for colour, the robust breadth of design, and the firm, unerring execution, which distinguish that great master, seem to have passed into Tiepolo, who revives the splendours of the sixteenth century in these superbly painted pageants. It is to be regretted that one so eminently gifted should have condescended to the barocco taste of the age in those many allegories and celestial triumphs which he executed upon the ceilings of palaces and the cupolas of churches. Little, except the frescoes of the Labia reception-hall, survives to show what Tiepolo might have achieved had he remained true to his native instinct for heroic subjects and for masculine sobriety of workmanship.

Of Canaletti it is not necessary to say much. The

[1] G. B. Tiepolo; b. 1692, d. 1769. Antonio Canale, or Canaletti; b. 1697, d. 1768. Pietro Longhi; b. 1702, d. about 1780. Francesco Guardi; b. 1712, d. 1793.

fame which he erewhile enjoyed in England has been obscured of late years—to some extent, perhaps by the fussy eloquence of Mr. Ruskin, but really by the finer sense for landscape and the truer way of rendering nature which have sprung up in Europe. Canaletti's pictures of Venetian buildings and canals strike us as cold, tame, and mechanical, accustomed as we are to the magic of Turner's palette and the penetrative force of his imagination.

Guardi, the pupil and in some respects the imitator of Canaletti, has met with a different fate. Less prized during the heyday of his master's fame, he has been steadily acquiring reputation on account of certain qualities peculiar to himself. His draughtsmanship displays an agreeable sketchiness; his colouring a graceful gemmy brightness and a glow of sunny gold. But what has mainly served to win for Guardi popularity is the attention he paid to contemporary costume and manners. Canaletti filled large canvasses with mathematical perspectives of city and water. At the same time he omitted life and incident. There is little to remind us that the Venice he so laboriously depicted was the Venice of perukes and bag-wigs, of masks and hoops and Carnival disguises. Guardi had an eye for local colour and for fashionable humours. The result is that some of his small pictures—one, for instance, which represents a brilliant reception in the Sala del Collegio of the Ducal Palace—have a real value for us by

recalling the life of a vanished and irrecoverable past. Thus Guardi illustrates the truth that artists may acquire posthumous importance by felicitous accident in their choice of subjects or the bias of their sympathies. We would willingly exchange a dozen so-called "historical pictures" for one fresh and vivid scene which brings a bygone phase of civilisation before our eyes.[1]

In this particular respect Longhi surpasses Guardi, and deserves to be styled the pictorial chronicler of Venetian society in the eighteenth century. He has even been called the Venetian Hogarth and the Venetian Boucher. Neither of these titles, however, as I shall attempt to demonstrate, rightly characterise his specific quality. Could his numerous works be collected in one place, or be adequately reproduced, we should possess a complete epitome of Venetian life and manners in the age which developed Goldoni and Casanova, Carlo Gozzi and Caterina Dolfin-Tron.

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[1] This is the bias of our scientific age. We do not want idealism, however meritorious—the idealism, for example, of the Caracci—the idealism which is supplied in academies. What we demand is a transcript from life or a piercing arrow from the genius of an epoch. We are keen, and rightly keen for documents of art, which hold up mirrors of an age in its external presentment, or betray the secret of its spiritual qualities.

II.

Very little is known of Longhi's career, and that little has no great importance. He was the son of a goldsmith, born at Venice in 1702, and brought up to his father's trade. While yet a lad, Pietro showed unusual powers of invention and elegance of drawing in the designs he made for ornamental silver-work. This induced his parents to let him study painting. His early training in the goldsmith's trade, however, seems to have left an indelible mark on Longhi's genius. A love of delicate line remained with him, and he displayed an affectionate partiality for the minutest details of decorative furniture, dress, and articles of luxury. Some of his drawings of plate—coffee-pots, chocolate-mills, ewers, salvers, water-vessels—are exquisite for their instinctive sense of graceful curve and unerring precision of contour. It was a period, as we know, during which such things acquired an almost flawless purity of outline; and Longhi felt them with the enthusiasm of a practised artisan.

He studied painting under Antonio Balestra at Venice, and also under Giuseppe Maria Crespi at Bologna. The baneful influences of the latter city may be traced in Longhi's earliest known undertaking. This is an elaborate work in fresco at the

Sagredo Palace on the Grand Canal. The patrician family of that name inhabited an old Venetian-Gothic house at San Felice. Early in the last century they rebuilt the hall and staircase in Palladian style, leaving the front with its beautiful arcades untouched. The decoration of this addition to their mansion was intrusted to Pietro Longhi in 1734. The subject, chosen by himself or indicated by his patron, was the Fall of the Giants—*La Caduta dei Giganti.* Longhi treated this unmanageable theme as follows. He placed the deities of Olympus upon the ceiling. Jupiter in the centre advances, brandishing his arms, and hurling forked lightnings on the Titans, who are precipitated headlong among solid purple clouds and masses of broken mountains, covering the three sides of the staircase. The scene is represented without dignity, dramatic force, or harmony of composition. The drawing throughout is feeble, the colouring heavy and tame, the execution unskilful. Longhi had no notion how to work in fresco, differing herein notably from his illustrious contemporary Tiepolo. A vulgar Jove, particularly vulgar in the declamatory sweep of his left hand, a vulgar Juno, with a sneering, tittering leer upon her common face, reveal the painter's want of feeling for mythological grandeur. The Titans are a confused heap of brawny, sprawling nudities—studied, perhaps, from gondoliers or stevedores, but showing a want of even academical adroitness in their ill-drawn extremities and inadequate foreshortenings.

It was essential in such a subject that movement should be suggested. Yet Longhi has contrived to make the falling rocks and lurid clouds look as though they were irremovably wedged into their places on the walls, while his ruining giants are clearly transcripts from naked models in repose. Here and there upon the ceiling we catch a note of graceful fancy, especially in a group of lightly-painted goddesses,—elegant and natural female figures, draped in pale blues and greens and pinks, with a silvery illumination from the upper sky. But the somewhat effeminate sweetness of this episode is ill-combined with the dull and impotent striving after violent effect in the main subject; and the whole composition leaves upon our mind the impression of "sound and fury, signifying nothing."

III.

It is singular that Longhi should have reached the age of thirty-two without discovering his real vocation. The absence of brain-force in the conception, of strength in the design, and of any effective adaptation to architecture, which damns the Sagredo frescoes, is enough to prove that he was here engaged on work for which he had no faculty and felt no sympathy.

What revealed to him the true bias of his talent?

Did he perchance, just about this period, come across some prints from Hogarth? That is very possible. But the records of his life are so hopelessly meagre that it were useless to indulge in conjecture.

I am not aware whether he had already essayed any of those domestic pieces and delineative scenes from social life which displayed his genuine artistic power, and for the sake of which his name will always be appreciated. He is said to have been of a gay, capricious temperament, delighting in the superficial aspects of aristocratic society, savouring the humours of the common folk with no less pleasure, and enjoying all phases of that easy-going Carnival gaiety in which the various classes met and mingled at Venice. These inclinations directed him at last into the right path. For some forty years he continued to paint a series of easel-pictures, none of them very large, some of them quite small, in which the Vanity Fair of Venice at his epoch was represented with fidelity and kindly feeling.

The panels attributed to Pietro Longhi are innumerable. They may be found scattered through public galleries and private collections, adorning the walls of patrician palaces, or thrust away in corners of country-houses. He worked carefully, polished the surface of his pictures to the finish of a miniature, set them in frames of a fixed pattern, and covered them with glass. These genre-pictures, while presenting notes of similarity, differ very considerably

in their technical handling and their scheme of colour. Our first inference, after inspecting a miscellaneous selection, is that Longhi must have started a school of imitators. Indeed this is probably the case; and it is certain that some pieces ascribed to his brush are the production of his son Alessandro, who was born in 1733. Yet closer study of authentic paintings by Pietro's hand compels the critic to be cautious before he rejects, on internal evidence of style, a single piece assigned by good tradition to this artist. The Museo Civico at Venice, for example, contains a large number of Longhis, some of which seem to fall below his usual standard. I have, however, discovered elaborate drawings for these doubtful pictures in the book of his original sketches, which is also preserved there. Longhi must therefore have painted the pictures himself, or must have left the execution of his designs to a pupil. Again, the style of his two masterpieces (the *Sala del Ridotto* and the *Parlatorio d'un Convento*, both in the Museo Civico) differs in important particulars from that of the elaborately finished little panels by which he is most widely known. These fine compositions are marked by a freer breadth of handling, a sketchy boldness, a combined richness and subtlety of colouring, and an animation of figures in movement, which are not common in the average of his genre-pieces. When I come to speak of the family portrait of the Pisani, signed by his name, I shall have to point out that

the style of execution, the scheme of colour, and the pictorial feeling of this large composition belong to a manner dissimilar from either of those which I have already indicated as belonging to authentic Longhis.

IV.

It has been well observed by a Venetian writer, whose meagre panegyric is nearly all we have in print upon the subject of this painter's biography, that "there is no scene or point of domestic life which Longhi has not treated many times and in divers ways. All those episodes which make up the Day of a Gentleman as sung at a later date by Parini, had been already set forth by the brush of Longhi."[1]

The duties of the toilette, over which ladies and young men of fashion dawdled through their mornings; the drinking of chocolate in bed, attended by a wife or mistress or obsequious man of business; the long hours spent before the looking-glass, with maids or valets matching complexions, sorting dresses from the wardrobe, and fixing patches upon telling points of cheek or forehead; the fashionable hairdresser, building up a lady's tower with tongs, or tying the knot of a beau's bag-wig; the children trooping in to kiss their mother's hand at

[1] See V. Lazari, *Elogio di Pietro Longhi.* Venezia, 1862.

breakfast-time—stiff little girls in hoops, and tiny *cavalieri* in uniform, with sword and shoe-buckles and queue; the vendors of flowered silks and laces laying out their wares; the pert young laundress smuggling a *billet-doux* into a beauty's hand before her unsuspecting husband's face; the fine gentleman ordering a waistcoat in the shop of a tailoress, ogling and flirting over the commission, while a running footman with tall cane in hand comes bustling in to ask if his lord's suit is ready; the old patrician lolling in his easy-chair and toying with a fan; the abbé turning over the leaves of some fresh play or morning paper: scenes like these we may assign to the Venetian forenoon.

Afternoon brings ceremonious visits, when grand ladies, sailing in their hoops, salute each other, and beaux make legs on entering a drawing-room, and lacqueys hand round chocolate on silver salvers. Dancing-lessons may perhaps be assigned to this part of the day; a spruce French professor teaching his fair pupil how to drop a curtsey, or to swim with solemn grace through the figures of the minuet. At night we are introduced to the hall of the Ridotto; patricians in toga and snow-white periwig hold banks for faro beneath the glittering chandeliers; men and women, closely masked, jostle each other at the gambling-tables, where sequins and ducats lie about in heaps. The petty houses, or *casini*, now engage attention. Here may be seen a pair of stealthy,

muffled libertines hastening to complete an assignation. Then there are meetings at street-corners or on the landing-places of *traghetti*—mysterious figures flitting to and fro in wide miraculous *bautte* beneath the light of flickering flambeaux. Both men and women in these nocturnal scenes wear muffs, trimmed with fur, and secured around their waist by girdles.

Theatres, masked balls, banquets and coffee-houses, music-parties in villa-gardens, the assemblies of literary coteries, promenades on the piazza, and Carnival processions, obtain their due share of attention from this vigilant observer. But, as is the way with Longhi, only episodes are treated. He does not, like some painters of our own time—like Mr. Frith, R.A., for instance—attempt to bring the accumulated details of a complex scene before us. He leaves the context of his chosen incident to be divined.

The traffic of the open streets—quack-doctors on their platforms with a crowd of gaping dupes around them, mountebanks performing tricks, the criers of stewed plums and sausages, fortune-tellers, itinerant musicians, improvisatory poets bawling out their octave stanzas, cloaked serenaders twangling mandolines—such motives may be found in fair abundance among Longhi's genre-pieces. Nor does he altogether neglect the country. Many of his pictures are devoted to hunting-parties, riding-lessons, shooting and fishing, all the amusements of the Venetian *villeggiatura*. Peasants lounging over their wine or pot-

tage at a rustic table are depicted with no less felicity than the beau and coquette in their glory. The grimy interior of a village-tavern is portrayed with the same gusto as a fine lady's gilt saloon.

V.

Longhi used to tell Goldoni that they—the painter and the playwright—were brethren in Art; and one of the poet's sonnets records this saying:—

> "Longhi, tu che la mia Musa sorella
> Chiami del tuo pennel che cerca il vero."

It seems that their contemporaries were alive to the similar qualities and the common aims of the two men; for Gasparo Gozzi drew a parallel between them in a number of his Venetian Gazzetta. Indeed the resemblance is more than merely superficial. Longhi surveyed human life with the same kindly glance and the same absence of gravity or depth of intuition as Goldoni. They both studied Nature, but Nature only in her genial moods. They both sincerely aimed at truth, but avoided truths which were sinister or painful.

This renders the designation of Venetian Hogarth peculiarly inappropriate to Longhi. There is neither tragedy nor satire, and only a thin silvery vein of humour, in his work. Indeed it may be questioned

whether he was in any exact sense humorous at all. What looks like humour in some of his pictures is probably unconscious. In like manner he lacked pathos, and never strove to moralise the themes he treated. Where would Hogarth be if we excluded Gargantuan humour, Juvenalian satire, stern morality, and cruel pathos from his scenes of social life? Longhi is never gross and never passionate. With a kind of sensitive French curiosity, he likes to graze the darker and the coarser side of life, and pass it by. He does not want to probe the cancers of the human breast, or to lay bare the festering sores of vice. What would become of Hogarth if he were deprived of his grim surgical anatomy? Neither in the heights nor in the depths was Longhi at home—neither in the region of Olympian poetry nor in the purgatory of man's sin and folly. He sailed delightfully, agreeably, across the middle waters of the world, where steering is not difficult.

In all this Goldoni resembles him, except only that Goldoni had a rich vein of cheerful humour. It would be therefore more just to call Longhi the Goldoni of painting than the Venetian Hogarth.

Longhi's portrait, unlike that of Goldoni, betrays no sensuousness. He seems to have had a long, refined face, with bright, benignant black eyes, a pleasantly smiling mouth, thin lips, and a look of gently subrisive appreciation rather than of irony or sarcasm. The engraving by which I know his

features suggests an intelligent, attenuated Addison—not a powerful or first-rate man, but a genially observant superior mediocrity.

Although Longhi, as a personality, is clearly not of the same type as Hogarth, there are certain points of similarity between the men as artists. Both were taught the goldsmith's trade, and both learned painting under Bolognese influences. Both eventually found their sphere in the delineation of the life around them. There the similarity ceases. Longhi lacks, as I have said, the humour, the satire, the penetrative imagination, the broad sympathy with human nature in its coarser aspects, which make Hogarth unrivalled as a pictorial moralist. At the same time, it is difficult to imagine that Longhi was not influenced by Hogarth. In the technique of his art he displays something which appears to be derived from the elder and stronger master—a choice of points for observation, an arrangement of figures in groups, a mode of rendering attitude and suggesting movement; finally, the manner of execution reminds us of Hogarth. Longhi abandoned his false decorative style, the style of the Palazzo Sagredo, at some time after 1734. This date corresponds with Hogarth's triumphant entrance upon his career as a satirical painter of society. Possibly Longhi may have met with the engravings of the *Marriage à la Mode*, and may have been stimulated by them to undertake the work, which he carried on with nothing

of Hogarth's moral force, and with a small portion of his descriptive faculty, yet still with valuable results for the student of eighteenth-century manners.

VI.

In 1763 an Academy for the study of the arts of design was opened by some members of the Pisani family in their palace at S. Stefano. The chiefs of that patrician house were four sons of the late Doge Alvise Pisani. According to Lazari, my sole authority for this passage in Longhi's biography, the founder of the Academy was a Procuratore di S. Marco, who had a son of remarkable promise. This son he wished to instruct in the fine arts; and Pietro Longhi was chosen to fill the chair of painting, which he occupied for two years. At the end of that time young Pisani died, and the institution was closed—now that the hopes which led to its foundation were extinguished.[1]

Among the few facts of Longhi's life this con-

[1] I have followed Lazari above. But examination of the Pisani pedigree (published for the *Nozze Giusti-Giustiniani*, Rovigo, Tip. Minelliana, 1887) shows that none of the Doge's sons was Procuratore di S. Marco, and that none of them had a son who died before marriage. The only Procuratore Pisani of this period was Giorgio Pisani (1739–1811), of the branch surnamed *In Procuratia*. He played a prominent part in the political history of the last days of the Venetian Republic. But he also had no son who can be connected with Lazari's

nection with the Pisani Academy has to be recorded. It is also of some importance in helping us to decide whether a large portrait-picture, representing the chiefs of the Pisani family, together with the wife and children of one of its most eminent members (Luigi, a godchild of Louis XIV.), is rightly ascribed to him. The huge canvas, which is now in the possession of the Contessa Evelina Almorò Pisani, was found by her rolled up and hidden away in a cabinet beneath the grand staircase of the Palazzo Pisani at S. Stefano.[1] It proved to be in excellent preservation; and it is signed in large clear text letters—*opus Petri Longi.* So far there would seem to be no doubt that the picture is genuine; and I, for my part, am prepared to accept it as such, when I consider that Longhi enjoyed the confidence of the Pisani family and presided over their Academy about the period when it was executed. Yet the student of his works cannot fail to be struck by marked differences of style between this and other authentic pictures from his hand.

The central group consists of the noble Lady

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story regarding the foundation of the Academy. I am obliged, therefore, to suppose that Lazari's account, though substantially correct as to the existence of the Academy in question, was based on a confused tradition regarding members of the Pisani family.

[1] The picture now hangs on the wall of Mme. Pisani's drawing-room in the Palazzo Barbaro on the Grand Canal of Venice. I may add, with regard to the signature, that the uncontested frescoes at the Sagredo Palace are signed *Pietro Longo*, and not *Longhi.*

Paolina Gambara, wife of Luigi Pisani, seated with her children round her.[1] Her husband stands behind, together with his three brothers and an intimate friend of the house. Allegorical figures representing the arts and sciences complete the composition. In the distance is seen the princely palace of Strà upon the Brenta, which was designed in part by one of the Pisani brothers. The arrangement of these inter-connected groups is excellent; the characterisation of the several heads, admirable; the drawing, firm and accurate; and the whole scene is bathed in a glow of roseate colour which seems actually to radiate light. Longhi, so far as I am aware, produced nothing in the same style as this complicated masterpiece of portraiture and allegorical suggestion. In conception, execution, and scheme of colour, it reminds us of a French painter; and if he had left a series of such works, he might have deserved what now seems the inappropriate title of the Venetian Boucher.

I cannot pretend to have seen more than a small portion of Longhi's pictures. But this portrait of the Pisani family detaches itself as something in a different key of feeling and of workmanship from any with which I am acquainted. Admirers of his art should not fail to pay it the attention it deserves; and if the

[1] The eldest of these children was born in 1753, and may have been about seven when the picture was painted.

day comes when a thorough study of this interesting master shall be made, it is not impossible that genuine paintings in the same manner may be discovered.

VII.

A series of frescoes attributed to Pietro Longhi should also here be mentioned. They decorate three sides of the staircase of the Palazzo Sina (formerly Grassi) on the Grand Canal. The balustrades of an open loggia or gallery are painted with bold architectural relief. Behind the pilasters of this balcony a motley company of life-sized figures promenade or stand about in groups. Some are entering in Carnival costume, with masks and long mantles. Others wear the gala dress of the last century. Elderly ladies are draped in the black *zendado* of Venetian aristocracy. Grave senators bend their courtly heads beneath the weight of snowy periwigs. Lacqueys in livery and running footmen in Albanian costume wait upon the guests, handing chocolate or wines on silver trays. This scene of fashionable life is depicted with vivacity; the studies of face and attitude are true to nature; an agreeable air of good tone and sober animation pervades the whole society. Probably many of the persons introduced were copied from the life; for it is reported of Longhi that one of his greatest merits was the

dexterity with which he reproduced the main actors in the *bel monde* of Venice—so that folk could recognise their acquaintances upon his canvas merely by the carriage of their mask and domino.

Owing to restoration, it is difficult to say how far the fresco-painting was well executed, and to what extent the original tone has been preserved. At present the colouring is somewhat chalky, dull, and lifeless; and I suspect Longhi's brush-work suffered considerably when the palace was internally remodelled some years ago.

VIII.

It only remains to speak of Pietro Longhi's sketch-book. This collection of original drawings, numbering 140 pieces, and containing a very large variety of studies (several pages being filled on front and back with upwards of ten separate figures) was formed by Alessandro Longhi. It came into the possession of the patrician Teodoro Correr, who bequeathed it, together with the rest of his immense museum, to the town of Venice.

As a supplement to Longhi's paintings, this sketch-book is invaluable. It brings us close to the artist's methods, aims, and personal predilections in the choice of motives. Most of the drawings are done in hard black pencil or chalk, heightened and

corrected with white; a few in soft red chalk. Unfortunately, they have suffered to a large extent from rubbing; and this injury is likely to increase with time, owing to the clumsy binding of the volume which contains them.

Studies from the nude are conspicuous by their extreme rarity and want of force. Great attention has been paid to the details of costume and furniture. The *zendado*, the *bautta*, the hoop, the bag-wig, the fop's coat and waistcoat, the patrician's civil mantle, the knee-breeches and stockings of a well-dressed gentleman, are copied and re-copied with loving care. Painters at the easel, ballet-girls with castanets, maid-servants holding trays, grooms and lacqueys, men on horseback, serenaders with lute or mandoline, ballad-singers, music and dancing-masters, women working at lace-pillows, gentlemen in bed, sportsmen discharging their fowling-pieces, gondoliers rowing, little girls in go-carts or fenced chairs, sellers of tarts upon the street, country boys in taverns, chests of drawers, pots, pans, jugs, gourds, wine-flasks, parrots in cages, ladies at the clavichord, queues, fans, books, snuff-boxes, tables, petticoats, desks, the draperies of doors and windows, wigs, footmen placing chairs for guests, beaux bowing in the doorway or whispering tender nothings at a beauty's ear, old men reclining in arm-chairs, embroiderers at work, muffs, copper water-buckets, nurses with babies in their arms, silver plate of all

descriptions:—such is the farrago of this multiform and graceful, but limited, series of transcripts from the world of visible objects. It is clear that Longhi thought "the proper study of mankind is man;" and man as a clothed, sociable, well-behaved animal.

His sketches are remarkable for their strenuous sincerity—their search after the right attitude, their serious effort to hit the precise line wanted, their suggested movement and seizure of life in the superficies. They have a sustained air of good-breeding, refined intelligence, and genial sympathy with the prose of human nature. Landscape might never have existed so far as Longhi was concerned. I do not think that a tree, a cloud, or even a flower will be found among the miscellaneous objects he so carefully studied and drew so deftly. The world he moved in was the world of men and women meeting on the surface-paths of daily intercourse. Even here, we do not detect the slightest interest in passionate or painful aspects of experience. All Longhi's people are well-to-do and placid in their different degrees. The peasants in the taverns do not brawl, nor the fine gentlemen fight duels, nor the lovers in the drawing-rooms quarrel. He seems to have overlooked beggary, disease, and every form of vice or suffering. He does not care for animals. With the exception of a parrot, a caged canary, and a stiffly drawn riding-horse, the brute creation is not repre-

sented in these sketches. No sarcasm, no grossness, no violence of any kind, disturbs the calm artistic seriousness, the sweet painstaking curiosity of his mental mood. The execution throughout is less robust than sensitively delicate. We feel a something French, a suggestion of Watteau's elysium of fashion, in his touch on things. In fine, the sketch-book corroborates the impression made on us by Longhi's finished pictures.

IX.

With all his limitations of character and artistic scope, Longi remains a very interesting and highly respectable painter. In an age of social corruption he remained free from impurity, and depicted only what was blameless and of good repute. We cannot study his work without surmising that manners in Italy were more refined than in our own country at that epoch—a conclusion to which we are also led by Goldoni's, Carlo Gozzi's, and even Casanova's Memoirs. Morally licentious and politically decadent the Venetians undoubtedly were; but they were neither brutal, nor cruel, nor savage, nor sottish. Even the less admirable aspects of their social life—its wasteful luxury and effeminate indulgence in pleasure—have been treated with so much reserve

by this humane artist, that youth and innocence can suffer no contamination from the study of his works. At the same time they are delightful for their gracious realism, for their naïve touch upon the follies of the period. Those who love to dream themselves back into the days of hoops and perukes—and there are many such among as now—should not neglect to make themselves acquainted with Pietro Longhi.

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